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**Working with disaster: Transforming experience into useful practice: How I used action research to guide my path while walking it**

Capewell, Elizabeth Ann

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**WORKING WITH DISASTER:  
TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE INTO  
A USEFUL PRACTICE**

**How I used action research to guide my path while walking it**

**ELIZABETH ANN CAPEWELL**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath  
Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice  
School of Management

December 2004

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is my account of the journey I made through which a challenging experience was transformed into a professional practice in the emerging field of psycho-social disaster response using the emerging practice of action research. My account is a complex interweaving of my personal and practical learning from disaster and my learning about action research as I transformed my first natural attempts into a rigorous practice.

The journey begins with one local disaster, the Hungerford massacre of August 1987, stops on the way to focus in depth on my long-term response to the Omagh bomb of 1998, and ends with another, the Berkshire rail crash, November 2004 calling at many others on the way. This learning from many perspectives also incorporated that of the most personal and profound kind from the death of my daughter in 1993. Using stories from my practice, the thesis explores the development of my original Trauma Process Model and a Crisis Management framework for responding to the human impact of major disaster and other traumatic incidents. Though each contributing event was in the past, their impact on my life and practice continue to be available for re-evaluation in the light of new understandings.

This thesis is a first-person account of cumulative evaluations and re-understandings of this journey through which the embryonic framework I used for my practice at the start of my PhD programme was consolidated and enhanced as my research progressed. I track how my action research philosophy and practice became a powerful approach for practice-based research that ensured my professional work maintained quality and integrity. My enquiries actively generated knowledge as I intertwined personal reflection with collaborative action that broadened out to engage much wider systems at national and international levels. In doing so, my own articulation of action research developed and influenced the disaster response models and strategies I was creating so that they too became useful methods of collaborative action research and social action.

Elizabeth Capewell, December 2004

Newbury, Berkshire

ccme.org@which.net

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Ann, our 'ethereal' daughter now absorbed back from whence she came, for realising that 'being positive' was to face, not fight, death, and for exhorting me to carry on with my work and use the experience of her dying to enhance it.

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## PART A

### THE OPENING STORIES

*"It is not for you to finish the task, but you are not free to desist from it"*

- Ethics of the Fathers, 2.21

#### **Sections:**

- 1. The Hungerford Massacre : the story that started it all**
- 2. The Research Story: the story that began my thesis**
- 3. This Thesis: A map of the dialogue between my practice and research**

I present these stories to show the starting points of this thesis. The first story tells how I suddenly became involved in disaster work after the Hungerford massacre in 1987. The second tells how my journey after the massacre grew into a search for rigour and recognition of the approaches I used in the personal exploration of my experience and in my developing professional disaster work practice. The dialogue that was produced between my experience and research stories produced this thesis, whose structure I map out in the third section.

My stories are printed in italics throughout this thesis. Extracts of longer stories are generally found in 'Story Boxes'.

My synæsthetic tendencies compel me to use the spelling "enquiry", as it has gentler connotations for me that I feel are closer to the intentions of action research than the spelling "inquiry" that suggests inquisition. However, I respect the use of this spelling by others, and use it when referring to their terminology.

## A 1

### **THE HUNGERFORD MASSACRE: THE STORY THAT STARTED IT ALL**

***“One day in August 1987 in the small town of Hungerford in rural Berkshire, a local man went berserk ...***

*That day, a day that changed my life, lies vividly in my memory. I should have been in Hungerford at the time, paying a managerial call on John, the Youth Centre Leader before he went on holiday. Instead, I was at home dealing with the aftermath of our first burglary the day before. My three young children and their friend, all on school holidays, were still in a state of fear and excitement about the burglary.*

*Suddenly, Sarah from next-door dashed in with a message from her Mum who worked at Securicor: ‘A gunman’s on the loose - stay indoors’. Our imaginations went wild – the gunman had to be our burglar who was obviously an escaped prisoner on the run. But here – in safe, quiet Newbury? Impossible! We just carried on, not quite as normal, until Radio 4 announced that this drama was being played out in Hungerford. Hungerford! Sleepy, law abiding Hungerford? That’s really impossible! How? Why?*

*Once we knew we were safe and free of risk, I took the children to hire pedal boats at the park. While the horror of the worst mass murder in Britain was unfolding nine miles away, we peddled around in final moments of innocence.*

*The story for me might have finished there, but instead I found myself becoming engaged in my first disaster response:*

*I returned home to hear John speaking on the 6 pm BBC radio news about the horror of seeing a gunman pass by his office window and into the school buildings. I was the District Youth and Community Officer, this was my ‘patch’ and I was his Manager. So I phoned him. He told me his story and how he escaped by driving his car over the rose bushes as fast as he could, only to be confronted by a scene of carnage in the streets. My first disaster response had begun.*

*As the impact unfolded through the evening – 16 dead, 15 injured and a community held under siege for 3 hours or so – it dawned on me that I might*

*have a role. I must go to Hungerford to support John and his team and discuss a response. The next morning, I called first at the District office to up-date my co-Officer before he went on leave that day and to contact the only Senior Youth Officer at Shire Hall who was not on holiday. I was startled by the reactions I received. The Shire Hall Officer seemed disengaged and my co-Officer told me bluntly that I shouldn't visit as 'John could manage by himself'. I felt puzzled, suspicious and more determined that I should go.*

*As I drove down the lanes to Hungerford, I felt strange - a strangeness of not knowing what to expect or what I would see and hear. I was acutely aware that this event, this place, would become part of history and what I chose to do could change the course of my career. As I drove, I noticed the feeling of importance, the tinge of excitement and then guilt for feeling these things. I questioned my motives – Why was I going? What would I find? Would I feel awkward? What would I do? Should I, an outsider, be there at all? Was my co-Officer right? But I had a duty to be there – it was my job to manage and support my staff, and my co-Officer, not for the first time, had challenged my role and my territory.*

*The policeman at the school entrance checked my credentials. I was struck by the silence and the absence of people around. I went into the Centre and sat for a long time while John poured out his story and memories of past deaths and re-stimulated experiences. He recounted his memories of the 1974 Birmingham IRA pub bomb near his first place of work. I listened again while his secretary poured out her stories. They still did not know that the last, and youngest person to be killed, had been on her way to visit John. She had been a member and helper at the Youth Centre.*

*It seemed an unreal situation – the day before, the man who had committed the worst act of mass murder known in the UK had shot himself dead in a room two floors above us. The unreality was broken by a Police Officer coming in to evacuate the building because of reports of unexploded grenades. By the evening, I knew I had to act – John was badly shaken and about to go on holiday. It was our duty, my duty if John was away, as the representatives of the Local Authority service for young people and the community. I phoned The Director of Social Services to offer our services.*

*Then I went back home to the mundane duties of family life and a 'Victim Support' volunteer offering support after our burglary. Our roles reversed as I listened to her trauma story – of being held hostage in a supermarket. Two trauma stories in one day - I'd never heard any so directly before."*

Opening this thesis abruptly with this story mirrors the abruptness of becoming involved in disaster. The whole Hungerford story is made up of many individual stories, some of which I have heard directly, some indirectly. Many will never be heard. My Hungerford story is but a small part of the whole, but it forms the starting point for unforeseen repercussions which produced the personal and professional stories from which I created a path of survival out of my own chaos. The Hungerford shootings marked my entry into the field of major disaster and many smaller-scale traumatic incidents. I have concerned myself with the human aspects of the impact of disaster, as a consultant, responder, trainer, educator and activist. I have aimed to pass on the learning from my path-making so that others can make their own paths from disaster with more choice and greater awareness than I did at first. It is a journey they can only make themselves, but by daring to shine the torch of my experience into their darkness they will know they are not alone.

But first I want to present another story, the one without which this thesis would not have been given form – the story of how I began the process of this doctoral thesis.

## A 2

### **THE RESEARCH STORY: THE STORY THAT BEGAN MY THESIS**

This is the story of how I came to do my thesis:

*"I graduated in 1969 when PhDs were undertaken mainly by those pursuing academic careers. I began a career with three threads – paid work, motherhood and voluntary work, all involving service to others in school or community settings. By the 1990's, the professional world seemed less accommodating of a person whose strength was in the breadth of skills drawn from several professions and many life experiences. I felt that a PhD might provide validation for what I had done in my work.*

*I had observed others going through the traditional PhD route and could not imagine myself doing the same, regarding their endless analyses of questionnaires as having little relevance to my world of unique events with unique people. I needed a programme that valued process as well as outcomes, and which was congruent with my values and inclusive of my ways of knowing and being. Above all, considering my age and stage of my career, it had to be of practical use to myself and my work. I had known about the New Paradigm Research group at Bath University since 1985 and the subsequent creation of the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP), so I knew it would suit my needs, but a particular moment influenced my decision to apply.*

*The precipitating factor was a paper published in the British Medical Journal in 1995 (Raphael, Meldrum and McFarlane, 1995), whose authors I had met in Australia in 1992. I realised that the paper was based on research to which I had contributed. They were challenging a popular group post-trauma method called Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), developed by an American, Jeffrey Mitchell, and designed to bring emergency staff teams together to process their experiences after major incidents (Mitchell, 1983, 1988). The BMJ paper started a research controversy which still continues and which I have researched as a by-product of this thesis (Capewell, 2004). Suffice to say here, critics of the method had based their assertions on research that did not use the method correctly and applied it to situations for which it was not*



*designed. It seemed to me that the traditional quantitative scientific approach to a profoundly human experience in unique circumstances could never measure what was important.*

*I felt angry about the controversy and felt other ways of research were needed. I took more notice of the next CARPP brochure I received. Knowing people leading the programme was an important consideration as I was still vulnerable after the death of my daughter. I was concerned especially about the impact of bereavement on my short-term memory and concentration, but I reasoned that if action research was for all, then there had to be room for someone really in need of researching themselves and their subject while going through a difficult time. The prospect of belonging to a community attracted me as I worked so much on my own.*

*The final decision to apply to CARPP came after I faxed one of the authors of the BMJ article about my concerns. This resulted in an invitation to be a Keynote speaker at a Conference in Australia in 1996. I came to see Peter Reason at CARPP to find out more about action research before writing my paper. In the paper, "Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: Practice, Pitfalls and Proposals" (Capewell, 1996a), I argued for a more inclusive paradigm for generating knowledge about post-trauma support strategies. Having given the lecture, I thought it was time to show my commitment to my convictions and pursue my studies at Bath. I applied and I was accepted for the 1997 CARPP 4 intake".*

### A 3

#### **A MAP OF THIS THESIS AND THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN MY PRACTICE AND RESEARCH**

The dialogue between these two stories began formally in 1997. The research process helped me make sense of my disaster story, then to view it from other perspectives. It helped affirm my existing ways of generating practice-based knowledge before helping me to discover new approaches. These informed future disaster work which in turn provided new opportunities for research. This whirling around of different stories affecting each other and operating on different time sequences has been a complex process, though the living of these stories has felt like a flowing river of interconnected and synchronistic journeys, far richer than I could have planned myself. In 1987 I could not have predicted how my life and career would develop and, when I joined CARPP in 1997, I could not have planned the route my action research would take. I have been willing to trust the process, suspend pre-conceptions, and live with unpredictability, using my core questions as guides.

How best to present this complex mix of interdependent and interactive strands has been a major challenge since all feel important to understanding the whole. This comment accurately reflects my experience:

*"... just as movie makers leave most of their film takes on the editing room floor, so researchers have often the gut-wrenching job of selecting far fewer data pieces to write about, write with, and then leave out...all this while simultaneously working to create a final report that communicates the wholeness of their vision"*

- Ely et al, 1997: 52

In telling my story, I blur the lines between me as a lay person and me as a professional. It is not a thesis about a professional testing out a method or theory just to further my professional knowledge or status. It is the thesis of a human being making sense of experiences that previous life and professional training could not immediately equip me to handle. It illustrates the process by which I mobilised and created resources to deal with, and go beyond, a distressing experience and then turn it into a professional practice, enriching myself in the process. I want my story to demonstrate that it is possible, through using the approaches of action research, for someone to find

their own path to recovery and practice from a point of being a professional, but not a disaster specialist, and a professional in a vulnerable state, often feeling hopeless and helpless with no future prospects.

This thesis is my living, never-ending enquiry, not a fixed and final conclusion. I am at a stage where I am ready to invite others to share in my enquiry journey and see how I have interwoven my practice and research into a path of professional practice. This path is an interweaving of four main strands:

- First, the experience and repercussions of the Hungerford massacre (Part B)
- Second, discovering how to survive personally and make sense of the experience (Part C).
- Third, creating and disseminating a practice starting at a time when little was known or written about the subject of disaster impact and management (Part D)
- Fourth, how to research what I did and do to develop my practice with enough quality and rigour to demonstrate its worth to others (Part E)

Such a list suggests an ordered construction. It was not. Many other experiences were interwoven along the way and what I was learning became part of my practice as well as my survival. For example, my process of survival had not ended before I left my job in Berkshire County Council and began my practice as an independent consultant. The methods I used for my survival developed to become an integral part of my practice and my practice contributed to my survival. Further experiences, such as the illness and death of Ann, my 16 year old daughter, cut across and threatened both my survival and practice, but also deepened and developed my professional work. Then the story was made more complex by my decision to undertake a PhD within an action research frame. This decision has undoubtedly influenced the path I have taken, through focusing my concerns, motivating action I might otherwise have not done (Capewell, 1998c, 2004a), re-working the experiences and deepening my practice. My enquiry methods matched the view of Marx and Vygotsky (Newman & Holzman, 1993) that they should 'be practised, not applied, neither a means to an end nor tools for achieving results' but 'simultaneously, prerequisite and product' (Vygotsky, 1978). I remain at heart a practitioner, an ACTION researcher, rather than an academic. Many times academic, 'laboratory' style research seemed irrelevant to my practice. Instead, I have built up a secondary 'dynamic, context dependent' knowledge that is 'mainly oral, fragmented and constructed' (Polkinghorne, 1999: 146; Kvale, 1999: 5). Academic depth has been a luxury in a time-hungry practice and has to remain its servant rather

than be pursued just for its own sake. I also know, because my colleagues tell me, that the essence of how I work has to be experienced and its reality is difficult to capture on paper.

This is the map of the journey I invite you to share. You have already read the two stories in Part A that were my starting point. In Part B, I identify aspects of myself that are dominant in my current work and look back to their roots in my history to help you understand the nature of the 'I' at the centre of my action and reflection. This is not the objective research of positivist science with claims to be value-free; the subjectivity and values of my work must be exposed.

I had to choose whether to continue the narrative of my Hungerford story, before the initial stories recounted at the start of this thesis had been forgotten, or move into the more technical aspects of my research story. I chose the latter so you could make better sense of how I developed my professional path. However, readers may wish to leave the technical sections until later. In these sections, I offer my own interpretation of the philosophy and principles of action research, including how I have sought to understand questions of quality and integrity. However, the practice and research stories, can never be fully separated and will continue to be interwoven throughout the rest of the thesis.

Parts C to E concern the development of my professional practice in real –life disaster situations (Table 1, overleaf). I had to make choices about which aspects of my whole story to tell. Dealing in depth with one small aspect of my practice would have been simpler, but I realised I was not yet ready to do this. The development of my practice has occurred alongside the development of disaster work in this country, and, partly because of my action research approach, I have trodden a slightly different route to the mainstream. I therefore need to articulate the central core of this whole before I can dissect it into parts. But I could not tell it all, so I decided to tell enough of the whole to illustrate the breadth of my work while choosing at certain points to demonstrate that depth is not ignored. I have also concentrated on the post-disaster response aspect of my work and have left out parts of my work such as training and dissemination, which, though vital, rely on my firm understanding and framing of my action after a disaster. I begin in Part C with my on-going enquiry into my own journey out of crisis, from which I produced my Trauma Process Map. I explain how this was developed from experiential enquiry and how it subsequently took a central role in the content and process of my professional practice, as well as in my own survival.

**TABLE 1: DISASTER WORK EXPERIENCES:****CONVERGENT AND DIVERGENT CYCLES OF ACTION RESEARCH****The Key Incidents that formed the raw material of my enquiries:**

1987	The Hungerford shootings: responding as a local professional
1989	Lockerbie disaster: secondment, disaster staff training
1989	Hillsborough Disaster immediate and medium-term responses: seconded to work with local authorities on Merseyside; later as a consultant for disaster team development
1991	Channel Rail Link – training local authority staff working with communities blighted by the proposed rail line.
1991	Visited Community Stress Prevention Centre and other specialists in Israel
1991	Gulf War 1: consultancy and training
1992	Churchill Fellowship to Australia, New Zealand and Los Angeles. assisted in a CIM training programme for New York City School Board
1993	Unexpected illness and death of my younger daughter
1994	Northern Ireland: invitation to run seminars for teachers and social workers.
1995	Croatia: Work with an Israeli team training psychologists from Former Yugoslavia
1996-1998	Derry, Northern Ireland: work in Primary schools including in the 'Bogside'
1996	London: first of nearly 60 work-place trauma response for a national company
1996	London Docklands bomb: co-ordinated response for Tower Hamlets LEA and London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in a school and the community
1996	Dunblane school shootings: work with the Social Services Support Centre team and Community Service staff, volunteers and elected councillors
1996	Manchester bomb: response work for a retail Company
1996-1997	Newbury: Community epidemiology study (leukaemias and radiation)
1998-2000	Northern Ireland & Co. Donegal: Omagh bomb response with several Education Authorities and many schools
1998-2001	Irish National Teacher's Union, development of CIM Guidelines and spin-off training
1999	Paddington train crash: consultancy and response work for Reading Borough Council Social Services and Chief Executives Department
2000	Bahrain: Gulf Air plane crash response ( Bahraini Department of Civil Aviation Affairs)
2001	September 11th attacks on America – small-scale response work in Ireland with US tourists; information dissemination by e-mail
2001	Namibia: fatal incident response involving an international youth organisation special group drawn mainly from Northern Ireland
2002	Potters Bar train crash: (a) work with young people and schools as a member of a team employed by the Police and WAGN train company; (b) response to a Company staff team who were witnesses and lay rescuers
2004	Ufton Nervet, Berkshire rail crash – community outreach initiatives as a member of the local area affected by the crash and post-disaster counselling.

Part D tells how I created cycles of action and reflection from my post-Hungerford disasters and trauma experiences to develop my principles and practice of the management of the human impact of disaster. I describe the models, maps and methods that I used, adapted and created to help me construct my path as I walked it.

I conclude in Part E with an account of how the strands of my learning came together in my involvement in the aftermath of the Omagh bomb. I reflect on the work as a whole in sections E1 and E2, before offering in E3 a detailed account of one part of the work that I believe is a synthesis of many strands of my thesis. A brief reflection of my thesis journey is given as a Post-script with signposts and dreams for how my path might continue.

I have tried to re-cycle the pain of distressing events and complex situations by communicating the learning gained in simple presentational forms. This is a deep simplicity born of my hard work and active learning, from the in-side as well as reflective-practice from many external angles. I ask the reader to imagine the whole as a fountain fed by deep and well fed springs with water spurting up and falling at different heights, cascading down and feeding back enriched water into the source to be re-cycled again to feed the fountain with enriched water. When I began the PhD programme at Bath, the fountain was small and rather shy of showing its full power to the world. It often retreated underground, not quite knowing how it fitted and not quite believing that something different could claim its place. Now, at the end of the PhD journey, it can be different and claim its place, knowing where it stands in relation to others, neither better nor worse, just different and with its own value. It spurts with confidence and cascades with many patterns, collecting new energy to re-new its sources. Alongside, other fountains have been encouraged to break out to claim their own place and to play their own patterns.

The force that fed my first fountain and kept it going as it found its current form has been constant throughout my PhD enquiry. It is in the form of a core question that emerged as a result of my Hungerford experiences. The pursuit of this question gave me purpose and helped my initial survival when I fell personally and professionally into a deep pit of despair:

“How can the gap be bridged between the disaster community and those with experience and expertise?” This stimulated subsidiary questions about the nature of the impact of disaster on human individual and social systems; the nature of the

gap that divides the two sides; and the nature and methods of construction of the bridges. I posed the questions:

- *“How can the people in the wider ‘ripples’ of the disaster impact be reached and supported, especially children, young people and other marginalised groups, and how can the stigma of accepting help be broken down?”*
- *“How can the human impact of disaster be managed in a way that does not create further trauma and stress to the community and disaster workers?”*
- *“How can I make sense of my seemingly illogical reactions as a worker, not a direct victim, and how do these compare with others caught up in disaster?”*

Though the pages that follow show that I have found some possible solutions, the questions continue and need to be reviewed for each new situation, for nothing is ever quite the same again in each disaster and affected community. It is this realisation that motivated the construction of my Site-Specific model of disaster assessment described in Section D3 and diagram 12. Thus these questions need to be asked as if for the first time with every incident, especially so that the new community or individual can be involved in their asking, often as a motivator to their own question making, and solution making.

My core question has resonated with the concerns of other professionals in other parts of the worlds who have had to face premature closure of their response efforts because managers and gatekeepers of resources with little knowledge and experience of disaster impact and response judged the needs of the situation using their own coping styles and needs as a yard-stick for the needs of others. They simply would not believe what needed to be done to reduce future problems because they could not envision unknown consequences before they had experienced them, or before the impact of the disaster had not yet been manifested in observable ways on the affected community. As shown in Section E2, this concern arose again for me very powerfully during the immediate response to the Omagh bomb when I thought I had taken adequate steps to ensure the problem would be solved. By the time the consequences were understood it was too late to take preventative action and the problems were far more entrenched and difficult to solve. Such experiences have kept my enquiry going and made me return to previous cycles of action and previous reflections to re-understand and search for more subtle clues about alternative approaches.

Since the Omagh bomb, I have pursued my enquiry question with more vigour, working on simple ways to communicate community and collaborative styles of assessment that also begin the work of recovery. This enquiry produced the further development of the 'Bridging the Gap' diagram and the creation of the 'Fishing Nets and Stepping Stones' models described in Section D3 (diagrams 7-9) for training events in 2003 and a more deliberate use of stories (for an example, see Story Box 15) to illustrate a style of work that I had taken for granted and mistakenly assumed was common practice.

This then has been the essence of my enquiry, from the Hungerford shootings in 1987 to the Berkshire rail crash in 2004. My latest experience shows that it must continue. Even though I have always felt that the answer lies in pre-disaster preparation and planning, even this cannot always provide the solution. I discovered after the Berkshire rail crash that the Local Authority crisis response team I had trained five years before had virtually disappeared in re-structuring and staff changes. The minimal response offered to survivors following the immediate rescue was mechanistic and untimely with little assessment of needs or pro-active outreach (see section F2). Offers of local specialist consultancy were not taken up even though the manager responsible for the response, as they revealed later to local journalists, had not known what to do and admitted to being unsure about what to do in the future to support survivors. My answer in this case, because I was part of the local community, was to fill the gap and produce the solution by my own voluntary outreach efforts because it was possible to do so in my own local area. In this way we reached many who felt isolated and forgotten.

I offer this contribution both to the subject of my professional practice and the paradigm of my research. The solutions I have found so far to my enquiry questions are to be found in this thesis in my attempt to consolidate, articulate and present the underlying philosophies and beliefs informing my practice, the methods and strategies I use. I have lived these enquiries and the subsidiary questions they have spawned for 17 years, gaining in the last eight years at CARPP more rigorous methods for pursuing them. Their articulation in this written form will enable me to pursue them in the future with more credibility and confidence.



## **PART B**

### **MY ARTICULATION OF PRACTICE-BASED ACTION RESEARCH**

#### **Sections:**

- 1. The 'I' at the centre of my action research: the perspective I bring**
- 2. The roots and development of my action research practice**
- 3. Questions of quality and integrity in my action research**
- 4. Methodology: the methods I used adapted and created in my practice**

In Part B of my thesis, I reflect on the research aspect that became intertwined with my disaster stories and produced a distinctive practice. As I am author of my stories and facilitator of my internal dialogues between them, it is important that you know something of who I am. All that I embody is the main resource available to me and others as I work with disaster. The first section gives you a glimpse into the aspects of me that feel important to understanding the meanings I have given to my experiences, why I am drawn to action research and disaster work, and how I approach my practice. I would recommend you read this section, even if you choose to leave the technical aspects of my action research practice until later.

Section 2 shows how I developed my understanding of action research, influenced by my need to use it first and foremost as a practitioner rather than as a researcher. This is followed in Section 3 with a discussion of the issues of quality and integrity faced by an action researcher who has no easy replacement for the validity criteria of positivist research beloved by many external monitors wanting concrete and measurable outcomes. Section 4 concludes Part B with an exploration of the action research strategies and methods I have used to develop my practice.

## B 1

### THE 'I' AT THE CENTRE OF MY ACTION RESEARCH

*"The understanding of human nature is an enormous problem, whose solution has been the goal of our culture since time immemorial. Its proper objective must be the understanding of human nature by every human being."*

- Alfred Adler (1927)

Action research is rooted in the participative view of the world, outlined by Skolimowski and summed up in his view, "I participate therefore I am" (Skolimowski, 1994, p.xx), in which subjective experiences are in interdependent relationship with the 'other' reality beyond ourselves. The role of the subjective is therefore central to the research, thus differentiating it from scientific research paradigms that demand objectivity (Reason, 1994:1-15; Skolimowski, 1994). The role of subjectivity in research has been an on-going contentious issue and, even in so-called objective research, ideological preferences leading to selective attention to data and biased conclusions have been identified (Hudson, 1972). William James noted that advancements in science depended on the 'passionate desires of individuals to get their own faiths confirmed' (James, 1904/1985: 21). Given our human need to search for meaning in the uncertainty of our lives neither felt biases should or could be avoided:

*"Our task is not to pretend such biases do not exist, but to establish patterns of conduct that take into account this biased selection of data by researchers."*

- Hudson, 1977: 13

Finding such a pattern of professional conduct is the concern of this chapter through an exploration of my biases that, fashioned by social, economic and emotional needs, cause me to be selective in what I attend to. If action research is to be rigorous, then the subjectivity must be tempered by a professional scepticism springing from insights into the raw materials of character and values underlying who I believe I am (my ontology) which informs how I believe I know (my preferred epistemology) and therefore the methodologies I choose for this thesis. These views are also the foundation for what I believe to be worthwhile tests of quality, explored in B3, for you and others to decide whether my interpretations of my experience have produced a worthwhile and useful practice.

My perspective, the 'eye' observing and the 'I' experiencing and interpreting my stories, is the thread that holds my journey together. There is no question that this part of my life and career has been dominated by MY experience and MY journey using MY maps and models that have evolved from MY reflection or MY adaptations of other people's ideas that have caught MY attention and inspired me. By working from experience and living my own truth at specific times, I feel I have contributed more to the world than when constrained by the needs and truths of organisations and theoretical knowledge. However, this has not been a self-centred, uncritical journey without checks and balances. My truth is the result of a relationship with the truths of other people and the world outside of me. With this in mind I have developed a practice that aims to help people discover and value their own truths, using my work as a guide to possible ways of doing it. I do not believe it possible for anyone else to replicate my practice, nor do I want them to. Instead, I hope my practice may influence them enough to develop their own, but without having to re-invent the wheel completely.

I have chosen to investigate the aspects of myself that recur as the issues and concerns of my present work. Insights have thus been generated that help me place my experiences and practice into a wider context of understanding so I can work with or change any of my beliefs or behaviour patterns that reduce my choices of action.

### **My perspective on self and the world**

Understanding enquiry choices is the 'primary rule of action research practice' (Reason & Bradbury 2001: xxvii). To understand mine, it is important to have some idea of the frame in which my concepts of self and the world lie. I find this difficult. It would be so much easier if I could hold an unquestioning belief in one particular religion or system of thought. But I stay with my present struggles along a cobbled together path, set in the traditions of a non-conformist Protestant Christian upbringing and culture that are hard to escape unless replaced by another strongly held new system. As a consequence, when events occur that challenge my concepts of self and the world, for example, after Ann's death, I find myself needing to make sense of things with reference to many belief systems. I live the paradox of humans of the last centuries described so clearly by the pre-World War II psycho-analyst Alexander Müller (trans. Wolf & Stein, 1992:1-4), wanting freedom from outer and higher powers, yet not wanting the meaningless, competitiveness and lack of personal responsibility of a deterministic, mechanistic view of life, nor the isolation of having to work only in one's own strength.

However, I accept that in order to have stability, I live by certain beliefs 'as if' they were true or would like them to be, even if my rational side cannot believe them or even if my other channels of being have not yet experienced them. Having felt that this was a rather indecisive way to live one's life, I was encouraged to find that the philosophies of both Vaihinger and Adler, drawing on Kant and Nietzsche, highlighted the practical value and indispensability for human beings to create ideal fictions and live by them 'as if' they were true (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956: 86-87). They saw the impossibility of never knowing for sure about such questions as the existence of God or gods – at least until a state of maturity or knowledge has been reached when either these fictions of belief or disbelief are proven to be true or false.

I hold the view that self is far more than a rational construct of our physical being or even the stories we make up about ourselves, because I am always discovering more than the story I have constructed about myself and sense I am constantly falling short of what I could be if I dared to use all the power and resources available to me. This in itself implies there are resources or powers available to me from beyond myself. Left to my own faculties, I could not have envisioned what has come my way over the last decade or so. I sense the energy of some greater life force, though I have no firm belief in what this is or might be. Its source may be within me, but I talk and act as if I am its channel, especially when dealing with the raw emotions of trauma. But I do not believe I am at the mercy of fate; I remain responsible for the choices I make and what I choose to do with my experiences and life. I am in conscious and unconscious co-participation in the creation of my life. I have a firm sense that my life since the Hungerford shootings has taken on the nature of a spiritual journey right here in the midst of the everyday world. Working in a cramped office in a fast food store in the heart of London, my colleague, Mel, and I came to the conclusion that being able to hold one's attention and be fully present with distressed people with noise and interruptions all around is a spiritual practice or, using Skolimowski's term, a Yoga of Participation (1994:163-169).

An image of self that I am drawn to is that of a whirlpool, a metaphor presented in 'Believe it or not', TV Channel 4, (7 September 2003), in which the self is viewed not as an object but as a process actively maintaining itself which can be felt and experienced, an idea that harks back to William James concept in 'The Meaning of Truth', 1909, of self as Promethean and self-making (Audi, 1995). At each stage in its development it may take on what looks like a form but in fact is always moving and changing as it is created, develops and dies, transferring its energies elsewhere. It is

the accumulated consequence of what has gone before and its interactions with what is around, yet is guided by known and unknown laws. It affects and is affected by all its experiences. Such an interactive view is possible even if I were to take a more biological view of self. Trauma specialist, Bessel van der Kolk writes, *"Life itself continues to transform our own biology"* (2002:50) while Ridley (2003) argues:

*"Genes are the epitome of sensitivity, the means by which creatures can be flexible, the very servants of experience. .... Genes are... active during life; they switch each other on and off; they respond to the environment. They may direct the construction of the body and brain in the womb but then they set about dismantling and rebuilding what they have made almost at once – in response to experience. **They are both cause and consequence of our actions.** Learning could not happen without an innate capacity to learn. Innateness could not be expressed without experience."*

I observe that the arguments I take note of and am excited by, whether from a scientific or spiritual stance, are those that fit a creative inter-active and interdependent world and self with the freedom to choose and change one's direction in life. It is also why I am drawn to the philosophies and practice of Alfred Adler and the ecological and participatory world-views of later writers such as Bateson (1976) and Skolimowski (1994). Adler viewed individuals as holistic, indivisible beings, a product of many possibilities and influences, unique, creative and dependent on the subjective interpretations the person gives to life (Stein & Edwards, 1998). They cannot be understood in isolation from the different spheres, spatial and temporal, of the cosmos, encompassing animals and inanimate objects as well as people and communities (Müller, 1992). The individual is a symphony of interactive, recursive processes (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994) and this is mirrored in the interdependence between the individual and the cosmos.

### **How have I selected the aspects of self presented here?**

In making selections, I am likely to be guilty of the biases I seek to expose. Some of the choices relate directly to what I believe I ought to know about myself and what my professional codes of conduct, in relation to my work in disaster, demand. These include answers to the question, "Why am I involved in disaster work? What are the social, economic and psychological drives behind what I do? " What aspects of myself help or hinder my work and my capacity to support others?" Other choices relate to the underlying beliefs and values that give passion and life to my work and affect the

attitudes underlying the way I practice. I have detected these from observing content, patterns, metaphor, language, strongly stated opinions and marked omissions when looking through my personal journals and writing and listening to tapes of my conversations in supervision groups. Invited and uninvited feedback from colleagues and training groups also contribute to my awareness, as do the culture shocks experienced and reflected upon when in strange or stressful situations, both at home and abroad.

Themes I have detected relating to my disaster work include issues of belonging, self-value, finding a voice, fear of poverty, and striving to compensate for feelings of inferiority. My concern to be a responsible practitioner motivated explorations of such issues as those outlined by Hawkins and Shohet (2000:11): if and how far my wish to help others is clouded by a 'lust for power or the meeting of my own needs'. Themes relating to values and biases which are important both to my disaster work and my action research practice include democracy, community, learning and passing on learning; the perspective I bring as a woman and mother; the places, culture and history I have been part of, along with the need to find a place, have my voice heard and my way of being accepted. The economic drive of needing to earn a living is also important.

As I enquire into myself, contradictions emerge. One of the most marked contradictions in my career has been the tension that exists in the clash between my shy and self-deprecating nature, wracked by feelings of inadequacy and the person that can grow and exude power and confidence in crisis situations and when faced by the media.

### **Methods of Enquiry: Discerning aspects of self, my values and beliefs**

I am not dealing here in absolute verifiable facts. Rather my enquiry into myself is a series of connections that have a resonance for me, both logically and emotionally, from which I can make hypotheses and pose possibilities that help me make some sense of who I am and how I perceive the world.

I have a background of many years of personal enquiry, as part of life and in therapeutic situations of various kinds. Some of these methods are described in B3. In this enquiry, I use one method, the Adlerian Individual Psychology technique of Early Recollections (Adler, 1931: 21-22; Beattie, 1994), because it means I lose some control in the selection process and surrender to the process. This method invites the recall of early memories associated with the issue being explored so that connections between

past and present can be made to increase understanding of the belief systems influencing the present. Adler's underlying theory emphasises the importance of early childhood experiences in forming the basic programme or script that the person continues to live by in adulthood.

I now offer you what I learnt about myself from the early memories activated by the themes observed from my writing.

### **The insights I gained that connect with my work and research**

#### **Insight 1: I can negotiate unknown territory**

My first exploration of this 'I' that chose to enter the chaos of disaster and the uncharted territory of a new research paradigm is concerned with understanding what attracts me to this challenging and unpredictable territory and reject safer, more accepted worlds. The challenges of action research are personal and political while the practical problems of persuading others to fund and use it are immense. It requires the capacity to let go of control and promote emergent enquiry whose path may be unpredictable. It is not for the faint-hearted, so why should anyone be drawn into its sphere? Similar comments can be made for disaster work and for other things I have done, such as founding a hostel for young offenders in Radstock, near Bath, when I was twenty-three.

The early recollection method reactivated the stories I heard of my birth, the point of emergence when raw experience and instinct are used to discover how to be and belong in the world just entered. Action research is the first tool for survival. The story of my entry into this world gives clues to how I came to learn the skills of negotiating entry into unknown, unsettled places in order to survive. It does not matter that the memory is not directly remembered by me but is the memory of stories told to me. The method can also work with the smallest fragment of feeling. The first picture created from the recollection was of a newborn baby on a cold table with an arc of people looking on saying 'no room'. My birth made my family homeless - the real significance of my birth to my family, the 'world' I was joining. I was the last straw that made my paternal grandmother say her house was too crowded for our family, except my father who worked in London.

The story of my introduction into my family led to further insights into our family dynamics. At 10 days old, I was taken to the Leicestershire home of my maternal grandparents where my 16 month old sister had been left for 6 weeks. She had the

task of being reunited with her mother and father while also being expected to accept and make room for a rival sibling. So I entered a world of uncertainty, tension and confusion and had to fight for space in another crowded house. I observe how, even now in the re-telling of the story I personalise events by saying 'I was the last straw' as if it was all my fault.

This picture of my entry causing disruption and accompanied by coldness and feeling an outsider is a constant theme through my life. Moving to Australia in 1951, and back to England again four years later, plus several more changes of home and school reinforced the patterns of the stranger entering a different world. It continued later with my entry to Cambridge University, as the first girl from my school to do so, and most of the jobs I took. It continues as a dominant theme in my various entries to disaster work.

I learnt the skills of entering uncertain worlds early on by carefully testing and mapping the territory, engaging and working with the people and resources available. An image I use of 'sensitive entry' is that of myself, aged ten, wanting to make friends outside our new home in Chiswick. By putting on my roller skates, I found a way of gently 'rolling' in alongside the other children until my movements matched theirs and I became one of them. I learnt to negotiate the territory without the need to know or control what happened. I also learnt when and how to leave, with regrets maybe, but not too many attachments.

My learning from these stories has fed my disaster work and my thinking on reunions following disaster (as in the story of a Youth Training Group returning home following a drowning on an activity holiday), the re-integration of disaster workers back into their normal work (see D2) and the integration of diverse groups into the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre team (see B4, Story Box 5).

### **Insight 2: I do not feel I belong, I feel have to fight to gain my place**

The story also hints at some insecurities and needs that help explain my attraction to certain styles of work. The feeling of not belonging to a particular place perhaps hints at my longing for community, and my attraction to community based work and research styles. In disaster work, I am thrust into communities at their most vulnerable when barriers have broken down and close bonds are forged, though these bonds are often transient or have abrupt endings.



But there is also a contradiction. In many early memories I am the outsider joining an existing group but, as much as I want to belong to it, I fear being trapped by its rules and culture. I notice how I want to preserve my independence of thought and I fear my identity will be taken away by those who are more dominant. I can survive best when I have a defined role and can move freely in and out of the group. As a child, I learned never to get too close to any group so that the inevitable leaving would be eased. My Hungerford and bereavement experiences left me mistrustful of groups and as a result I notice that I can be in a group and I love facilitating groups, but I am rarely of the group. The place that suits me best is on the edge, where I can contribute enough but retain my place as an observer and, in return, receive a little nourishment from the group. I used to feel this was bad, but now I accept that, from this attached but detached position, I can maintain clarity of vision and freedom to offer insights to groups who may be too encultured, when, as a Chinese proverb says, *'the fish are the last to know the sea'*. My entry on such occasions may be experienced as a disturbance, but also as a necessary act which, in the end, is welcomed.

**Insight 3: I am a connector of people and a catalyst who makes things happen**

This 'on the edge' position makes me an ideal 'bridge' between different groups or agencies, though this does make me a messenger at risk of being shot. This feels like the role I learnt in the family. It has continued throughout my career, for example in my roles as a Community Worker working within the tensions between the community and the Local Authorities who paid me, or in social action where I have established unpopular schemes. These dynamics have been repeated in the world of disaster where I am often an external consultant working with unknown, disrupted systems. The skills I developed to deal with them are similar to the complex facilitation tasks of action research, where diverse needs of many stakeholders have to be negotiated, and to the tasks of the net-worker and catalyst who watch out for connections and opportunities for sparking key actions and ideas.

**Insight 4: I do not belong, yet I can recognise what it is to belong**

Another snapshot from childhood indicates the richness and complexity of contradictions. Balancing the feelings of never quite being accepted, I was fortunate enough to have some childhood experiences of the warmth of belonging. In my mother's home village I was still an outsider by birth-place, but I could see the evidence of extended family and belonging in its history, buildings and the churchyard. Feelings of particular pride came from the extraordinary stories that often do emerge from very ordinary families. My forbears were original action researchers who worked hard,

without any Government funding, for the betterment of their families and the village society. Motivated by their faith, they founded their local Co-operative Society in 1860 that spawned houses, shops, factories and social institutions. They were dissenters, members of the Congregational chapel, that relied on and developed their skills in music, teaching and administration. The Chapel had also produced great-great-aunt Alice whose story is told in point 6 below and who has become my role model.

**Insight 5: I have the pursuit of democracy ingrained in me.**

My pursuit of democracy and the right of anyone to a voice and a place is also linked to this village and in particular the Congregational Chapel. I reframed the boring memories of my chapel experiences after hearing a radio talk by Tony Benn, MP, whose family was steeped in Congregationalism. He described the Congregational martyrs who died for the right to worship their God directly in a democratically run church without an Episcopal hierarchy. Congregational ministers, including women, my earliest models of female leaders, were the servants of their congregations.

These democratic values enabled many of my family members to exercise power and develop skills otherwise denied to them as members of the working class. Power gained from playing a useful contribution in society was exercised in the pursuit of God. The expectation that everyone had the right to be consulted and heard was deeply engrained in our family belief system, but it was balanced by an equally strong belief that we also had a duty to make an active contribution to society. This belief in democracy was a most valuable gift and a fundamental motivator to many of my actions.

**Insight 6: I have a motivation towards action for social change**

My community activist ancestors gave me models of being that were incorporated into my blueprint for living in which action research could so easily fit. My movement to act on being confronted with a social need is strong and is a prime driver of the choices I make. I draw on it for sustenance when I am working against the majority view, as is often the case in disaster situations.

I am continually inspired by the story I heard through childhood of Great-great-aunt Alice, another product of the Chapel, who left for Bechuanaland in 1893 as a 23 year old missionary teacher. When Khama, King of the Bechuana, came to England in 1895 to challenge Queen Victoria on the colonialist ambitions of Cecil Rhodes, he fulfilled a promise to visit and thank Alice's parents for her work with his people, bringing an

unlikely entourage of black Africans to this rather insular village (Parsons, 1998). These stories gave me the warm feeling and knowledge that even our humble family could extend our influence far into the world. Aunt Alice and her daughter taught the children of the Kings of Bechuana, including Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana, who created the one African country with a democracy, no debts and no political prisoners (McCall Smith, 2003: 18 & 33). Alice was an initiator 'who did not take long to size things up and make a start' (Rutherford, 1983: 34). Unlike her fellow missionary-teacher who kept aloof from local customs, Alice learnt the local language and songs while she taught the locals hers (p.34). Seeing her skill and enthusiasm for a new school and teacher training class, King Khama backed it with money, labour and his own authority (p. 35). Alice thus laid the foundations for the Bechuanaland education system. I use her story for inspiration.

### **Insight 7: Sometimes, I have to be a boundary rider**

My Australian colleague, Sue, suggested I was a 'Boundary Rider' who was skilled at managing boundaries of contracts and organisations, but with the intuition and courage to know when they needed to be crossed or challenged. In reflecting on this observation, I can see how my propensity to be 'on the edge' of groups, crossing from the inside to the outside and back again means that I become very aware of the nature of the edge, as I had probably also done in early childhood when I moved from one place and school culture to another. The comment really gained meaning, however, when in 1998, I discovered the story of my paternal grandfather from the War Graves Commission web-site ([www. cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)). Grandfather James Aldridge must have been skilled in traversing new and desolate territory. Having gone out to South Africa in the Boer War, he remained there as a Mounted Policeman covering a vast area in the remote Kimberley region. At the outbreak of the First World War, his first task in the South African Mounted Rifles was to protect the boundary along the Orange River between South Africa and German South West Africa (now Namibia). Within a month, he and most of his regiment were shot dead, led by incompetent Officers right into the fire of the enemy (Collyer, 1937)

This story has given me a metaphor for consultancy, reminding me that boundary riding is a dangerous activity that risks premature endings. The boundaries should only be broken if the greater good cannot be achieved in any other way and with the greatest protection possible. Boundary riding also requires competent and entrepreneurial leadership and protection, along with the intuition and skills of a tracker so familiar with the territory they can sense when and where to cross them. It is a thrilling role, easily

open to being done for the thrill rather than for good purpose. Realising the terrible consequences of mistakes tempers hasty action.

**Insight 8: I have had to challenge some early beliefs that can trap me.**

Congregationalism left me with other characteristics that, if not moderated, could create problems. Some were so deeply engrained they are hard to remove entirely – an over-pronounced Protestant work ethic, the feeling that I always have to give and give voluntarily (not helpful when running a business), guilt if I don't take action, a fear of doing the wrong thing (or more accurately, being caught for it), and the belief that fun in certain forms is bad.

**Insight 9: I am a product of my social class**

Though I had much evidence of democracy in the family, would I have so avidly pursued it for others if I had not felt what it was like to feel inferior? My family were reunited a few years after my birth when my mother's fighting spirit gained us a post-war 'prefab.' in Northolt, west London. I recall becoming aware of my social place there. I was above the 'common' kids who played in the gutter, but well below the likes of the Doctor at the clinic. We were in what I call the 'limbo class', the lower middle class, whose members are neither part of the working class, (who they have rejected and fear to return to), nor are they accepted by the middle classes who view them as inferior. In that position the benefits of both working and middle class are lost, a position explored by Brian Friel, in his play *'Freedom and the City'*. We had to take on the perceived behaviours of the middle class to emphasise we were not working class, so consequently lost the warmth and spontaneity of lower classes who made the most of every minute because they were not hampered by doing things 'properly' nor had money to plan for an uncertain future. By denying ourselves, we had just enough money to think we had a future, but never enough to stop the constant fear of debt. But nor did we have the money and the imbibed culture of the articulate, confident middle classes who knew about art and literature. I notice that I am especially drawn to working with people wanting to empower themselves by validating their ways of knowing and being, as my later stories in Part B2, B4 and E3 show.

**Insight 10: I learned that there is always an alternative**

I remember being told in 1951 that we were emigrating to Australia. I didn't know what Australia was, but I was excited. My memories of the experience remain vivid. First, I had to experience saying good-bye to grandparents, knowing we might never see them again. I remember the new and exciting world of the SS Ranchi and living alongside

different people, ten to a cabin, for many weeks; the strange ports of call with exotic names – Céuta, Port Said, Aden and Colombo, all with unfamiliar sounds and smells, and all with sunshine, in sharp contrast to the drabness of my post-war London home. The dramas of the journey are imprinted on my memory. The ship's engines broke down repeatedly, most memorably in the middle of the Suez canal, blocking it for a week and leaving us with little electricity and water. A baby died. I can still see the agony etched on the mother's face. But tragedy was followed by fun as we 'Crossed the Line' (Equator) with all the rituals of the sea. We reached Australia after ten weeks, celebrating our arrival in a country free from post-war sweet rationing with lollipops bigger than we had ever seen before.

This is a defining story of my childhood. Not only is it a useful metaphor for the journey of life, it inculcated in me useful beliefs that **'things don't have to stay the same', 'there is always an alternative'** and **'there is never one way of doing or being'**. I also learnt that a child can cope with change if the family unit remains secure. These beliefs have helped me out of low points in my life such as the greyness of my repressed teenage years in suburbia and the oppressiveness of being 'just' a mother at home in a rural backwater in the 1970's. They also helped me re-invent my career several times, pulling me out of distress. It is knowledge that I can now frame and use in my work to mobilise people stuck in negative beliefs that nothing in their situation or themselves can change.

Other spin-offs from emigration have been my well developed sense of location and spatial relationships that influenced my choice of University degree (Geography) and has contributed to my understanding of community dynamics in relation to disaster impact and recovery, and the use of mapping as a method of impact assessment and response.

#### **Insight 11: I have found a way to live with my contradictions**

*"Without contraries there is no progression"*

- Wm. Blake, *'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: The Argument'*, 1793

Blake's assertion encourages me to value and live with my contradictions. They both delight and frustrate me according to how I frame them. This chameleon characteristic can aid survival when it encourages adaptability in different environments, but is degenerative if I never allow my true self to be seen, using it to confuse or manipulate people. I would trace the roots of this trait back to my need to survive in a confused

and changing environment and my perceived duty not to upset my mother by showing my true feelings. However, I learnt to know myself enough to stand by my beliefs and values when it really matters, but, at other times, I can access different aspects of myself in order to gain rapport with people who are very different from myself. I can survive in new situations whilst finding my bearings and I value my openness to different views and my ability to empathise with others.

An astrologer I met once gave me a framing for my contradictions. Being a person of contradictions, I could accept what she said as well as being sceptical. She explained my extrovert-introvert dynamic in which I had two opposing needs, both to be out in the public arena and to stay quietly in the shadows. If I can complete actions set in motion while 'in the sun', there is no problem, but I run into trouble if I want to hide in the shadows too soon. This contradiction resonates with the tension I see between my reserved English nature and my lively Australian side that wants to be out in the world making a noise. The Jungian analyst, Arnie Mindell, saw this aspect in me when I attended his workshop in 1991. He told me that it was time I "*stopped being in the audience and acquired one of my own*". So I did, - but not without running many times back into the shadows.

#### **Insight 12: My perspective as a woman and mother is fundamental to my being and my style of work**

My career has often involved helping women to find their power. My passion came from realising how my own position as a girl and woman had been denied and the power of my emergence as '*a Woman in [My] Own Right*' (Dickson, 1982). I am also aware my career ran parallel with the powerful post-1968 re-emergence of feminism. I shall give the background to a major theme of my work and why I still become passionate when I see a good woman being crushed by a system just because of her gender, as I did in my work following the Omagh bomb (see E3).

It could have been different. My mother was the powerful force in our family, so too were my father's mother who had followed her fiancé to live in remote South Africa and my missionary aunt Alice. But no one ever referred to the women in the family as strong, independent and courageous. I realised what they had achieved by working it out for myself years later from the stories I remembered. I was fortunate that my secondary school, Bexley Grammar, was new, co-educational and with young inspiring teachers. As a girl, as long as I colluded with the traditional values of work and achievement, I could hold my own with the boys. I became the first girl from the school

to gain a place at Oxbridge and the first to represent the County at hockey and athletics. But being academic and sporty did not equate with being female and I never felt 'one of the girls'. I internalised all the attitudes about 'blue-stocking' academic women when I got a place at Cambridge in 1966, in spite of the campaign by a contemporary of mine for the '*Transmogrification of the Girton Image*' (Nova magazine, 1969). It was not until I had my first baby in 1975 that I felt at all acceptable as a real woman by other women.

I did not develop feminist attitudes as a result of Consciousness Raising groups or from reading Feminist literature. They grew out of my lived experience and only later were they framed by external theories. At Cambridge, being in the minority as women meant we were special and in great demand by men, but it was as if we were only present by the invitation of men. Women had only won the right to collect their degrees twenty years before in 1948. At the time, however, I was more aware of the feelings of humiliation from issues of class rather than gender, for example when reprimanded by the Professor for passing the port the wrong way at a formal dinner. The seeds of my feminism were sown in the last few terms, for example, when the career options offered to me by the University Careers Officer as a woman wearing an engagement ring were summed up by her words, "*Well. It's teaching for you then, my dear*". I am ashamed to say, I dutifully accepted my role and followed my fiancé to Bristol, taking a low paid job until I could register for teacher training at Bristol University.

Negative views about being a woman provided a background which trapped me in internalised patriarchal views of women and denied my female ways of being and knowing. I began to 'emerge' once I took Maternity Leave and received the culture shock of being treated differently as a woman with no job status. I struggled to rid myself of internalised attitudes and to counter prejudice against me as a woman, without being anti-men. It was during one of these struggles, during my first experience of a bullying boss, that I began my journey into self-empowerment through therapy and, thereafter, along paths that brought me under the influence of action research practitioners in Bath. I also discovered that even in my rural backwater, there were strong women who had emerged already, for example, Jill Miller, a working class woman who had found her voice and written '*Happy as a Dead Cat*', (1984), a story of an emerging feminist.

At the same time, I had to learn to live alongside the men who had economic and institutional power over me while encouraging my female qualities to develop and

emerge. The place of women in society affected my initial choice of career and ever since I have structured my career to fit in with my role as a mother. I do not, however, regret what I constructed since it has allowed me to participate in a mixture of work and family arenas on my terms, a luxury that many men and younger career orientated women do not have.

Gender themes run through the development of my pre-and post-disaster career, (as in the stories in Boxes 1 and 2 and section E3), and practice as an action researcher. When I was plunged into the real world after University as a married woman I followed a very female path of teaching, voluntary work, motherhood and jobs in the helping professions. The lack of a formal career progression meant I had little useful practical preparation for any of these tasks, and I had to learn by trial and error, taking responsibility for my own development using whatever skills and experience I had gathered on the way. Therapy brought a rapid transformation that led to fast promotion to my job as a Community Development Officer in Avon County Council, where I began to use the attitudes and skills I was imbibing from my new mentors in Bath. It was during this short period before my next promotion that I began to develop what I now regard as my particular action research style for the service of others (see the Peasedown story, Story Box 1, p.36). I believe this work is fundamental to my use of action research in my disaster work.

### **Bringing the threads of the past into my present self**

These stories helped me understand the origins of some key values and influences that have been the stepping stones to where I am now as a disaster specialist and action researcher. As I look back into my vivid memories of the little girl in my stories, I feel her as a very knowing observer, noting, taking in and trying to make sense of all she saw and felt. I like to think I carry her with me into the many new territories I encounter today.

My enquiry has helped me discern the values I imbibed from childhood, such as the feel for **democracy** and the right of people to have a role and a voice so their talents can be nurtured. I internalised values of **social action** and **duty** in the service of the community when I saw a need. I learnt that change is always possible and people did not have to accept their lot or their place. Action could be taken regardless of how people were defined by others and it could be taken without waiting for others to do it for you. The belief in **empowerment through self-help** and the **co-operative practice** of helping each other has been a strong influence throughout my career.



Some beliefs and values needed to be unlearned, mainly those that were instilled through fear of punishment by God. The resulting need to be good and to take the moral high ground of self-righteousness had to be un-learned. I also had to learn the difference between behaving in certain ways because I was expected to, and behaving in order to make a socially useful contribution. Releasing myself from the prejudices I was brought up with in the 1950's and '60's, and re-applying my values in a more inclusive way, to all people, including myself as a woman, has been an ongoing task, like peeling the layers of an onion away. Some contradictions both trouble me and fuel my motivation, as do my vulnerabilities which both hold me back and keep me compassionate and in touch with the human frailties of others, giving credibility to my work with them. As this thesis develops I shall weave more threads from other stories and other enquiries into self. By the end I hope you will have a story of me which helps you understand foundational influences on the path I have made and present in these pages.

## B 2

### **THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE**

Joining the CARPP programme confirmed my commitment to the principles of action research. I still had to find out what action research meant to me as I understood that creating new orthodoxies and fixed methods was not the intention. In this section, I shall explore the roots and development of my interpretation of the philosophy and practice of action research. The philosophy and practice of action research and its rejection of old scientific paradigms is now well documented (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Reason & Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1988, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Heron, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), while Lincoln gives an account of the subtle differences between action research and social constructivism (2001) and I shall not repeat them here. An exploration of quality and integrity questions will follow in section B3 and the methods I use in B4.

### **THE ROOTS OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE**

The roots of my action research practice can be detected from a piece of community work I undertook in 1984 in an old mining village, Peasedown St. John, near Bath (Story Box 1, overleaf). This work influenced my approach to the Hungerford response three years later. Reflecting on how far this work was action research helped me move from a purely intellectual understanding of action research to knowing it from within.

The Peasedown work had the feel of action research because the action and the research were so interdependent and interactive, depending on in-the-moment actions and reflections. But was it true action research? Was it just an example of what Reason called 'Naïve action research' (Reason, 1981: xii-xiii) or another example of how a term can be diluted and diminished by using it too loosely to include, for example, uncritical organisational consulting just because it incorporates feedback (Reason, 2001)? Yet when I also read of Reason and Bradbury's commitment to '*a full integration of knowledge and action in inquiry as a practice of living*' in their '*Handbook of Action Research*', (2001: xxiv), I want to shout 'Yes! That piece of work at Peasedown did just that'. In some ways it felt like the purest form of action research because the principles I had imbibed spontaneously from my mentors, who were involved in action research in Bath, were fully embodied in my

### **STORY BOX 1    Peasedown St. John Community Action**

*This was one of several projects I was initiating in my newly created role of Community Development Officer in Avon County Council in 1984. Peasedown was then a very run down ex-mining village with many people struggling with difficult circumstances. I had met a young woman from Peasedown at my ante-natal class and had gone to her home to talk about needs in the village. The next week more women came and listened and asked questions. I told them about my role and resources. They were tough, resilient but subjugated by their roles at home. They felt their choices were limited and their voices seldom heard by authority figures including, in most cases, their husbands. Their most practical need was for a children's playground. Together we came up with ideas. A campaign video was high on their list and I provided resources and an instructor to teach them how to do it. But the group was outgrowing the house and to hire rooms at the local Youth Centre, they first had to learn to overcome sexist attitudes, such as "their stilettos will ruin the floors; their kids will create mayhem". Their latent political action skills flourished and the words 'Peasedown women' made County Officers quake in their shoes. The weekly group spawned other arts and educational activities but its essence was in the collaborative support between the women and between the group and their paid colleagues. When I was promoted I supported them in other ways through my new job. With the new community worker, they continued their campaign through overtly political pantomimes. They achieved their primary goal eventually, but much more was gained in the process in terms of confidence, skills and friendship. The pantomimes formed the basis of large-scale community plays in the whole Radstock District. One woman qualified as a part-time community worker and the project continued in different forms for over ten years until Avon County Council was disbanded. - Taken from my records, 1986*

action and reflection for its own sake. I was not burdened with trying to do 'proper research', so I could approach the people I encountered in a state of mind described by Maslow:

*"..in getting to know another person, it is best to keep your brain out of the way, to look and listen totally, to be completely absorbed, receptive, passive, patient and waiting rather than eager, quick and impatient. It does not help to start measuring, questioning, calculating or testing out theories, categorising, or classifying." – Maslow (1954)*

## Was this work action research?

### The criteria

By applying what I now know, I can look at this early work more critically. I shall assess how far it was true to action research principles first by using the core, essential elements of several proponents. Reason and Bradbury's form of action research 'starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001:2) as the Peasedown project did. Their criteria asks that the practice is a combined process which **is participative, encourages human and ecological flourishing, uses practical knowledge, is emergent and developmental** and draws on **many ways of knowing**.

To these criteria, I would add another key characteristic: the integrated use of **first, second and third person research** and practice approaches (Reason and Torbert, 2001) which gives a clear framework for the many action research methods available. Briefly the three approaches involve the rigorous reflection on one's own actions and choices (first-person) and choices enhanced by collaborative investigations and reflections with others (second-person) in order to engage with wider systems (third-person), both to create knowledge, stimulate further enquiry and effect change. They are most effective when used in a complex of practice. I shall refer to these throughout my thesis.

### Setting my Peasedown practice against the criteria

First, I approached the work with an intention to use a style based on **participation**, reflection and action in real time. The context of my involvement meant that I had to take a pragmatic approach, taking care, for instance, that the women had enough information and support to be aware of the possible political and personal consequences of their choices. It also had to be **emergent** since I had neither a formal induction nor clear job expectations and boundaries. The choice of people I spoke to was the result of my previous **practical and experiential** knowledge of this community and intuition about who might be receptive and who might be ready for change in their lives. The fact that I was a woman with young children clearly caused a bias to work with people in a similar position and, via an ante-natal class, also led to my first contact. However, this bias was not only gender based as male community workers in other districts also showed a similar bias, reflecting the mood and agenda of community work practice of that era (Popple, 1995:24-28).

I could not have done the work without the full **participation** of the women – if it had not met their needs and they had not felt valued, they simply would not have participated. I had no preconceived notions about what might result in terms of process or outcome and I had to give full receptive attention. I needed the 'community' to guide me as no one in the Department had really decided what their new community workers were meant to be doing. The need to act to please my bosses need for concrete results sharpened my listening, but the choice of project, the children's playground campaign, was the women's and they chose the practical method (video) from the resources I could offer. Their choices led me into working in the political zone of tension between the community I worked with and the people who employed me, for example in the women's fight to use the Youth Centre, and brought new participants from the Council into the process. Such involvement was a crucial process towards human flourishing of the women, and hopefully of the men who needed to be persuaded to change their sexist attitudes.

Joining the group was not always easy for the women if their husbands did not approve and we all had to make use of many ways, especially female ways, of knowing and learning. There was a **tacit female understanding** between us that there would be fewer objections from the men if the project benefited their children. The fact that the women continued their commitment to the project was evidence of the **developmental** aspects in our work which built their confidence and purpose. There was evidence of change in their confidence and skills at personal, social and political levels, most notably in their ability to create a video and pantomime, confront professionals and politicians in power, perform in front of others, gain use of buildings barred to them and to access further education, as described in the story. This led, 15 years later, to a First Class University Degree in Creative Writing for one woman. The empowerment and **flourishing** of these women had parallels with my own and other female workers as we learned to move away from accepted traditional female roles. We also learnt to deconstruct terminology that kept us in our place and no longer talked of our husbands 'allowing' us to work, even if, like mine, they were more than pleased that we did. This job was the second stage of my movement from being 'just a mother', to low-paid part-time work to low-paid full-time work and eventually to a job and salary more commensurate with my training and skills. A volunteer helper, an unemployed single parent, attributes the chances and training given to her in this project as the key turning point in her life (Moss, recent personal communications).

Our strategies and methods integrated enquiry practice at different levels: me, us, and wider political and community systems. Use was made of **first person practices** (self-reflection and care), **second person methods** (collaboration with myself and participants, participants and their partners, other community workers and local professionals in adult Education, Social and health services, therapy and private consultancy) and **third person strategies** (engagement with systems to increase contributors to knowledge and undertake political action to bring about sustainable change). These were brought together, not in a systematic programme, but in a messy, lively and ever changing strategy of choices based on a living theory of using one's position and skills to help others improve their lives. From a canvas with only a few scribbles, a work of art, or perhaps a moving installation was created together.

I would claim that Reason and Bradbury's core elements were present in this work, along with characteristics of other articulations of it. Also present is Torbert's action research orientation of integrating 'inquiry and action in the present moment' and using it in '**a timely way**', (Chandler & Torbert, 2003), with loops of learning at an individual level feeding into learning at organisational and community levels. The concept of action facing "not only the problem of how to understand events and practice, but also the problem of how to infuse events and practices with a certain understanding" (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996) can be discerned in the developing skills and understanding of the women that led them to explore the fundamental beliefs and politics that had influenced their lives and restrictions placed on them. Increased understanding about ways to bring about change in their lives and local community resulted. Though they may not have known this in propositional terms, they lived this knowledge. They learned how to become sufficiently emancipated and liberated, first of all to dare to join the group and then to challenge those in authority who blocked their way to fulfilling their goals. In this aspect of the project, I can also detect Greenwood and Levin's (1998) essential ingredients of action research: **participation, action and social change** directly **relevant** to the lives of all of us participating.

In short, we co-generated knowledge through our action together. Our respect for each other grew and the impact of power differences was lessened as they gained respect for their own forms of knowledge, practical skills and power. Their '*Women's Way of Knowing*' (Belenky et al, 1986) was validated. The quality of the project's foundations was sufficient for the group to exist, develop and change long after I had been promoted to another job. Given enough information about political systems and encouragement to find their hidden voice, their courage, honed through years of

survival as women leading tough lives, allowed them to become owners of their campaign and their project. If the women were developing, then so was I – in confidence, skills and attitudes. I was learning about systems of power, the tensions of community work, the power of information in the hands that needed it and the fear of men in the bureaucracy facing a group of determined, newly empowered working-class women, no longer afraid to challenge the status quo.

When I reflect on what resulted from that first meeting over a cup of tea it feels like magic. It was magic sparked by the hidden energy of that one young mother, reading her poetry about the nuclear threat as she mashed the potato for her husband's dinner. I have an organic image of an isolated spark suddenly given oxygen and setting off seemingly chaotic balls of energy that did their work unseen until a web of connections was formed with the power to make bigger things happen. In a small part of the world, systems were shaken and a few things changed, and change created more change.

The limits to my claim that this was action research were in the lack of writing up and transmitting what we had done. I did not value the work as something worthy of dissemination, while caring for three young children and developing many other projects in my District were considerable barriers to writing. However, I kept detailed records of my daily work activities and outcomes to protect myself in a 'watch your back' culture. The tasks of community work were difficult to explain to those who viewed having cups of tea with people as refreshment rather than the medium for engagement and empowerment.

Now I can imagine other ways of doing this work using whole systems methods (Pratt et al, 2000), with the benefit of new technologies such as Open Space conferences (Owen, 1997) and large group interventions (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Leith, 1997) to involve more sectors of the community. However, such strategies might have intimidated the women and silenced their voices. Community work methods drew heavily on informal, emergent and organic styles of working. The choice of who I contacted first was based on my understanding of how to reach silenced women quietly, even subversively, through their children until they could raise enough confidence to resist attempts to crush them. Going through established community channels in this tough macho ex-mining community, where incest and abuse against women and children were reportedly high, would have made it impossible for them to be seen, let alone heard in their true voice.

In terms of epistemology and methodology I can claim this was 'good enough', pragmatic action research, given the restrictions of my role and resources and who and where we were at that time, geographically, emotionally and cognitively. I had a practical task to achieve but I could not achieve the task without integrating meaningful practice-based research. I believe I did so with less naïvety than I first thought, coming from a position where certain values and theoretical perspectives, absorbed from various training and influences on my early career in the politically radical world of Bristol and Bath in the 1970's and early 80's, had been well integrated into my practice.

My action was to enable enquiry, growing spontaneously out of the fact that I was living my values of promoting useful social action in my work and working in partnership with people for their benefit and wider social change, though there was always benefit, challenge and change for me too. The women showed me how they survived and exercised their power in spite of their circumstances and were as challenging to me as they were to the system. They were also incredibly supportive and I became aware of how much I needed them to help me assert my own social and political agenda. Because of this, I had to exercise my integrity so as not to misuse them or abandon them later when I gained promotion. The work was conducted with good enough quality for powerful results to emerge for these mothers, who kept many struggling families going, and for myself in my struggle to re-create a career and develop practices that influenced future work

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE**

### **Early progress**

Between leaving the Peasedown project in 1985 and the Hungerford massacre in 1987, was a period of intense and rapid learning. I took many opportunities that developed the foundational skills of my present action research and disaster work practice. Such was the speed of my own empowerment, I was promoted in 1985 to become Principal Staff Development Officer in the newly created Avon County Council Community Development Department. Here I learned much from being one of the first women in the Department to break into management, learning about organisational systems and the challenging power structures, the status quo and discriminatory practice. I created systems that allowed previously devalued groups to find their place and instigated a whole-systems strategy for integrating the newly combined, but philosophically different services (youth, community, libraries). Here I learned about



how to help the 'system know itself' (Pratt, 2000: 16-17) to envision its future. An account of this work is included in Hawkins and Shohet, (1989, 2000, Chapter 9). The practices I learnt have since served me well and some are reminiscent of Cooperrider's 'Appreciative Inquiry' methods (Ludema et al, 2001) and Large Group Interventions (Leith, 1997). One aspect of my learning about organisational dynamics, the tactics used by middle managers to sabotage senior officials at HQ, was particularly useful in a later cycle of development when I became a middle manager, a Youth and Community Officer in Berkshire, and found myself in a position of challenging senior managers at HQ, described in C2.

Also at this time I joined a two-year experiential Humanistic Psychology Diploma programme sponsored by Bath University. It was a challenging course of collaborative enquiry with a diverse group of 20 people through which I gained experiential and practical knowledge of a very meaningful kind. This course was crucial for developing my capacity to facilitate groups in difficult situations and engage in disaster work. The Humanistic Psychology framework, a core influence in the development of action research, contributed to my experiential understanding of its principles. Most of all I learnt how not to be afraid of chaos, meeting Heron's action research criteria of the need to allow the unfolding of distress and chaos from which creative solutions may emerge (Heron, 1996).

Half way through this course, in 1986, my husband was promoted to a position in London and I became a District Youth and Community Officer in Berkshire Education Authority, based in Newbury. Thus began a period in which I learnt much about the kind of culture in which action research as an integral part of practice cannot so easily flourish.

### **Learning about the conditions counter-productive to action research**

The strength of action research is that some form of it can be used anywhere, at anytime by anyone, even if only for surviving conditions where it cannot flourish. The sterile, non-learning culture of the politically reactionary Berkshire Council of the 1980's and a very macho Youth and Community Service taught me a great deal about what Schön also discovered, that:

*"the scope and direction of a manager's self-reflection-in-action are strongly influenced and may be severely limited by the learning system of the organization" - Schön, 1983: 242*

It was quite unlike my experiences in Avon Council where, except for teaching, all my work roles were newly created giving me freedom to be innovative.

In Berkshire, first-person reflection was a means of survival though its quality was reduced but my depleted internal environment. I had left a job I loved, I had left an area whose beauty fed my spirit, and I had lost my personal and professional female networks. I hated the job, I hated the move, I hated the area because it was not Bath and the people seemed different, they seemed affluent, time-starved and closed. I fell into depression and all my reflections were negative, creating an even more negative view of my situation. Every attempt to develop female networks or any networks of like-minded people floundered and every avenue I explored was a dead-end. My course and consultancy sessions in Bath were my only places where I could breathe and reflect.

In my new job, it was hard to claim my power and territory sharing an office, area and resources with a long established co-Officer who, I discovered later, kept power and information from me. Our line Manager abdicated his responsibility for managing the co-officer relationship. Everything was fixed by existing patterns and procedures and there was no room for innovation. Line Management was not my strength as being Staff Development Manager had been. Moreover, feminine energy and ways of knowing were dis-respected as fair play for ridicule. I had no allies at Officer level, except for one established female Officer who was ousted from her post in acrimonious circumstances soon after my arrival.

My retrospective reflection on this period highlighted the conditions I need to engage in action research as an integral part of my practice. Interestingly similar conclusions were drawn from the Joseph Rowntree research project (see section B4 and Mead, 1996:10) for good conditions for disaster workers. They are:

- The space to breathe and be myself through freedom from over-rigid procedures, expectations and demands.
- Within those flexible boundaries, the freedom to be creative, freedom to access many forms of knowing without fear of prejudiced attitudes and freedom to be responsive to emergent needs.
- Allies in the same organisation with similar perspectives and values, who are not too encultured to see the bigger picture or too afraid to challenge the status quo.

- A positive mental state to act with clarity and be confident in my personal power and ability.
- A management style that does not abdicate the responsibility entrusted to it, is trusting and supportive of autonomy and creativity, allows risks to be taken, and encourages learning.
- A role that is not trapped in what Charles Handy describes as a bureaucratic 'Apollo' culture. (see Part D and Handy, 1988). Handy's entrepreneurial 'Zeus', the expert 'Athena', or the creative 'Dionysus' roles are more conducive to action research.

I was quite obviously in the wrong job in the wrong place, yet I was there at the right time for the role I discovered in the aftermath of the Hungerford massacre. The repercussions of the disaster work opened up conditions conducive to my natural organic style of working. Thus, I found my time to be present in this organisation in the way I knew best to live the experiences on which this thesis is based.

Since that time, I have found myself using and living action research, constantly seeking ways to intertwine personal, collaborative and systemic enquiry as a means of personal survival, economic and professional development. Creating my own business and working in a newly developing field has meant that I have never returned to the kind of organisational setting that suffocates me and my creativity. I nearly did once, just after I left my Berkshire job, but my soul rebelled at the threat to my integrity posed by another bullying boss and I removed myself quickly.

## THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF MY EPISTEMOLOGY

My learning about using action research as a framework for my disaster work practice still has a long way to go but this thesis is a resting place to account for what and how I have learned so far. Through my time on the CARPP programme, I have reflected on my practice and writings, in collaboration with my peer supervision and workshop groups, and list below the principal characteristics I have discerned in my epistemology:

**Characteristic 1: My route to generating my action research knowledge has been long and tortuous, a messy, creative 'act of faith'.**

I found a philosophy and practice in action research which felt immensely familiar, yet hard to pin down and define exactly because, like myself, it refuses to be pinned down

and categorised. It is holistic, emergent in response to real needs rather than the needs of a researcher or the body commissioning the research. My way of generating knowledge is a messy and creative 'act of faith', proceeding cautiously and tentatively as I test it. If I really allow myself to enter into the communities I work with, I have to risk myself and suspend preconceived ideas of what will emerge, while at the same time holding responsibility for what I know and what I have been paid to do.

**Characteristic 2: Action research is something I live as well as practice at work.**

I became aware of this when my daughter was ill and dying in 1993. People told me to forget I was a professional and just be a mother, but this distinction was unreal to me as I cannot be split into pieces. Posing questions, observing, feeling, allowing myself to be absorbed in a new experience, acting, reflecting, finding out, trying out, reviewing are the way I explore my territory and survive in the whole of my life. By holding core questions and concerns, usually the ones that have created dissonance with what I know or believe, I seek to discover more about them in all parts of my life. Little of what I have written about in this thesis has been planned as disaster rarely gives notice of its arrival. Opportunities for learning arose unexpectedly, spinning off into new arenas and feeding back to inform the old. What I have held constant is the presence of questions and aims flowing from, and sometimes refining, my core values and goals that are key to my personality and behaviour.

**Characteristic 3: My perspective is holistic and interdependent**

My disaster learning cycles have already been described in terms of a fountain with water returning to the source to be recycled into new cascades, an interconnecting process of discovery.

I aim to hold both the whole and the contributing parts of my subject, as well as work across different channels of being as a friend with deep insight helped me realise. The friend, Herthe, was with me in an Oxford hospital during the night of my daughter's dying. She noticed how I was able to hold many aspects of that night – persuading another hospital that, when my husband was taken ill en route home, he was hyperventilating, not drunk; locating our other children and finding support for them; dealing with my angry mother on the phone; negotiating with the nurses to turn a clinical room into a sacred space fit for the process of dying; maintaining myself physically and emotionally so I could be totally present with Ann in her dying. Without Herthe's reflections, I would never have been aware of my capacity to move across many levels of being or its worth as a capacity to be nurtured. I had tacitly

encapsulated the process of action research in the moment of each need, whilst at the same time holding the whole system involved in Ann's death in my mind and acting as appropriate – expanding outwards, then pulling into myself and my relationship with Ann in her final moments of life.

My own experience taught me to view people as whole beings of whom their traumatic experience is a part, countering the common tendencies in the professional world I encountered to view them as traumatised or bereaved people, split off from their whole selves as well as the social environment in which they were embedded.

**Characteristic 4: Values, meaning and usefulness must have a place in research with human beings.**

Einstein summed this up succinctly with the note he pinned to his wall:

*“Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts.”*

The phrase indicates the limits of ‘counting methodologies’ since they so easily exclude what is deemed to be worthwhile and useful. When I used it in my lecture at a conference in New Zealand in 1998, a member of the audience reported that, as one, the audience picked up their pens to scribble it down, such was their recognition of its truth. This does not mean that I do not respect the accomplishments of the scientific method and I do not reject quantitative methodologies used appropriately in a way that is respectful and inclusive of the people supplying the data. For example, in my Community Epidemiology Study of Leukaemias in Newbury (Capewell, 1998c), it was important to quantify data in a statistically rigorous manner. The use of statistical methods empowered our community by enabling us to speak the language understood by Health Authorities and Cancer Registries. However, I have challenged the belief of many in my field that the same methods could research everything, even the unquantifiable (Capewell, 1996a, 1997, 1999, 2004a, Capewell & Capewell, 1997). What is also at fault is the insistence that scientific research is truly objective and value free when science is clearly a value-laden social activity subject to all kinds of social manipulations. Richard Lazarus explores the truth of this in his research into the psychology of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1998).

### **Characteristic 5: My methodology has involved and valued many ways of knowing**

Although I had a bent for cognitive knowledge and succeeded academically at school, I was always aware that it did not prepare me for the practical world or help me realise my full potential as a human being living in a world which had many more channels of existence. I noticed the dissonance between what I found to be useful learning and what the established world told me was so. Life experiences such as giving birth, rearing children and general living in this world, as well as experiential training, could not be ignored, nor could my perspective as a woman and my female way of doing things. Belenky et al (1986) noted that many major transformations in women's ways of knowing came from their first experience of becoming a mother. I can add to this that even more come from their first experience of the death of a child, echoing the old saying that *"you are never truly a woman until you have experienced the death of a child"*.

In creating my professional practice, John Heron's concept of the Four Ways of Knowing (Heron, 1996:163) has been particularly helpful in framing different forms of knowing. Heron describes experiential, pre-verbal knowing as the tacit knowing gained from direct encounters in the world using all the senses. This type of knowing is of course very relevant for dealing with the repercussions of moments of extreme experience when the frontal lobes of the brain dealing with cognitive processes are suspended and the most primitive, pre-verbal right-hemisphere of the brain is highly aroused (van der Kolk et al, 1996). Experiential knowing gives birth to images and representations of the experience that Heron describes as **Presentational Knowing**, another form immediately relevant to my own development and my work. My experiential knowing at Hungerford transformed into the presentational form shape with the emergence of my Trauma Process Map. I use a similar process when working with disaster survivors as they take their first steps towards sense-making in the form of cognitive **Propositional Knowledge**, the third way of knowing that is given a privileged position in the rational, mechanistic Western world. The fourth way, **Practical Knowing**, is the culmination of all the previous forms of knowledge and is the means by which they are transformed into physical, emotional and spiritual skills and useful practice. These are the practical skills needed in order to survive in this world – to maintain ourselves as individuals, to have intimate relationships for procreation and nurturance, and to contribute usefully to the social group that will, in return, provide mutual protection and support (Adler, 1927). Thus, my disaster work practice was first generated from experience grounded in knowledge gained from my previous practical,

experiential and cognitive knowledge which I later processed, developed, framed and put into practice, using further experiences to deepen my knowledge and its application in many contexts.

**Characteristic 6: The perspective of my gender is important but not dominant**

An influential part of my empowerment came from the validation of my ways of knowing as a woman, often described as *'Women's Ways of Knowing'*. The writings of Belenky et al (1986) enabled me to understand these, but also where my formal education and greater economic power made me different from the women in their research. I explored this in more depth in my Diploma paper in relation to the Newbury Leukaemia Community Epidemiology study (Capewell, 1998c). Thus I had another task – to value the skills I had learned from the masculine world. I did so by reaching the conclusion that neither types of skill are good nor bad, it is the manner of application that is important. Like yin and yang, which contain a little of each other, so-called masculine, 'left-brain' strategies need to be employed with the sensitivity and wisdom of the 'female' way and so-called female, right-brain strategies need some of the rigour of the 'masculine' way. Polarisations cause distortions and the loss of useful methods from each perspective. My understanding of these different ways of knowing has meant that I have been a useful bridge between people with different styles. Much of my success working in Ireland has been my ease with working in communities and cultures where story making are dominant but where the patriarchal nature of church and established society has subjugated many of these voices, especially those of women. For example, after the Omagh bomb:

*"A school Principal, whose 'woman's way of knowing' was disbelieved by her Managers, had been labelled a 'neurotic' woman and made a scapegoat. I could recognise her plight as she had recognised, in the suffering of her staff and pupils, what others had failed to understand. I was, however, able to stand back from her accusations about her Managers and communicate with them in the practical and propositional language which they had to use to be acceptable in their own organisations. By creating a 'safe space', I enabled the Managers to meet in a spirit of enquiry as a group to find a shared language for their own experiences. Meanwhile, I helped the woman channel her emotions and experiential knowing into practical action with a cognitive framing. Thus a bridge was constructed between them."*

- Taken from my records, 1998. See also section E3.

This example points to the importance of relationship and conversation in knowledge creation, a theme explored by Reason in his conversation with the Pragmatist, Richard Rorty (Reason, 2003) and by Lazarus (1998:396). The Managers above obviously had their own experiential knowing, but it was trapped by their own lack of language or value for it and useless unless it could be expressed in conversation with colleagues and others. They were too fearful of what it meant to them and of the reactions of peers in a work culture that would ridicule or dismiss it. Thus they could neither tolerate a dialogue with this powerful form of knowing within themselves any more than they could tolerate it in others.

**Characteristic 7: My action research is aspirational, teleological and pragmatic.**

In the spirit of Vaihinger (trans. 1925), I work 'as if' the ideal conditions such as perfect participation and democracy were always possible, deciding that it is better to proceed with imperfection than wait for the impossible ideal and not proceed at all. While the aspiration is present, indicated by the actions taken to strive towards perfection, it is more likely that the essential elements of action research will be retained. By being **aspirational**, my action research is goal-orientated and therefore **teleological**. When I am stuck in negativity, my transformational question, "*What CAN I do?*" is provoked by the goal of survival. When I look at the social or organisational context of an individual, my goal is for a higher level of strategic and more lasting change. Because my goals are practical, using all the (usually limited) resources and time available, and the ideal rarely attainable, my approach must be **pragmatic** in terms of action research practice and my disaster work aims. My action research is therefore a **practice orientated research** and I define myself as first and foremost a practitioner. I am encouraged by the words of Fals-Bordo (1996) that:

*"Knowledge, theory building, intuition, hypothesis making can all be derived from practice. Knowledge cannot be derived from any action, only from meaningful behaviour (or PRAXIS) enriched with prudence for the achievement of the good life (Aristotle's PHRONESIS). We can progress in spite of the instability and uncertainty of life through regulated improvisations".*

Action research has been an ideal, perhaps the only, way for me to research my practice because it is a **strategy of actions and reflections**, a 'process of inquiry involving not only propositional knowledge but also practical and experiential knowledge' (Heron, 1981a) and a flexible research which frees and empowers me to be creative in achieving its goals and criteria in whatever situation I find myself. For



instance, if formal collaborative research groups are not feasible, I can find many ways of involving the ideas and reflections of others before taking action which can be refined as it proceeds. This leads into the following three characteristics of my epistemology.

**Characteristic 8: Knowledge is generated with greater rigour and richness, and is most likely to be relevant and put into practice, when it is gained in collaboration with others.**

While I am a firm advocate of collaborative practice and partnership, I am under no illusion about the difficulties, as shown in the case studies collected by Reason (1994), and the way in which the terms can be manipulated by agencies in order to gain funding or credibility. In an action research project I co-ordinated concerning Youth Crime in Bath (Bath YCSC, 1992), many 'stakeholders' would not participate because previous experiences with collaborative exercises had been tokenistic and nothing had changed. I found in my Community Epidemiology study (Capewell, 1998c) that many people were not used to inclusive ways of working and rejected such ideas suggested by me as a peer, though they did participate fully in a democratically run Community Brainstorm led by an external facilitator. Participation after disaster can also be difficult because people want things done for them, yet also want to be in control. Seemingly democratic community initiatives and decisions have been the source of further trauma for the victims, as found by bereaved parents in Dunblane (North, 2000), while community leaders often speak for themselves or the part of the community that is dominant. Collaborations seem to work best where they are initiated as a joint effort between people with a shared purpose and a willingness to give similar amounts of commitment. Having practical and financial resources to support the running of the groups also helps.

I set up a collaborative group, The Disaster Staff Network, when I first became self-employed. Though the group was mutually supportive and we learned a great deal from each other, the logistical problems of a national network became too great and too burdensome for the few of us who were willing to do the work. I have noticed many similar problems even with a well funded Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) collaborative project, of which I was a member, composed of people with great commitment, but too many conflicting demands on their time. As a small independent practitioner, I am also aware of how much of my intellectual property I give away in such collaborations if I am to give my full commitment.

I have had to be creative to ensure that I am not making a solipsistic path on my own without the enriching experience of contributions from others. Participation and collaboration can, however, take many forms, from simple consultation to full collaborative research with participants involved in critical decisions at every stage of the process, from problems definition, choice of methods, data interpretation and use of learning (Reason and Rowan, 1981). Perhaps even more important is the question of where the power lies (Merrifield, 1993) in who determines the need for research, who controls the process, the decision-making, dissemination of results and accountability. In the Newbury Community Epidemiology Study (Capewell, 1998c), the power for each of these stages lay in the hands of the people affected by the problem, but within that group there were still many issues of inequality in power and responsibility. We were also still dependent on those with an established power base because of the unequal access to funding and information. Even when, the Oxford Cancer Intelligence Unit was ordered by a court of law to release information, following action by Dr Chris Busby of the Low Level radiation Association, they still refused (Busby, personal Communication).

Though my path is often solitary, it is guided by service to others and the wish to enable the transformation of attitudes and practice, not just the generation of knowledge, a key aspect of Participative Action Research according to Orlando Fals-Borda (1996):

*“just gaining valid knowledge is not enough – it must also be useful, especially to exploited communities and those whose knowledge and power are not privileged. It is about justice and equalising exchanges”*

Our Newbury Community Epidemiology Study aimed at this in our efforts to challenge the dominant scientific community in their arrogant dismissal of the lay community and those who dared to support us from the scientific community (usually haematologists with direct knowledge of patients as people, not statistics), who themselves had been marginalised. (Dr Alice Stewart, Lecture, Greenwich, 2000; Green 1999). We were seeking justice for other forms of knowing by demanding a more humane form of science as Merrifield had demanded in similar work in Tennessee:

*“What we need to do now is break the link between scientific knowledge and elite forms of enquiry and devise new approaches that combine essential elements of scientific research - the rigorous rules of proof for example - with*

*the process that is accountable to people... to meet the needs of ordinary people rather than the power holders."*

- Merrifield, (1993).

**Characteristic 9: I have a responsibility to act in the interests of the world and a responsibility to develop my conscious awareness to discover purpose.**

These two responsibilities lie at the heart of my epistemology and I return to them in moments of feeling worthless and inadequate when I ask myself "why bother?" or "who do you think you are that you should presume to have something to offer?" They originate in the world view that we are all co-responsible for the fate of the world and, in the words of the Adlerian, Müller, which resonate with the ecological views of Skolimowski (1994) and Bateson (1976).

*"Where we neglect developing ourselves or neglect developing the power to do good or correct injustice, we share the guilt, the responsibility for the negative or destructive outcome. We are all co-responsible through our awareness of creation, a planning creation that calls upon us to cooperate in completing an unfinished world. Awareness of creation means awareness of the unity of all existence."*

- trans. Wolf and Stein, (1992)

I am inspired by Müller's challenge that since we are endowed with consciousness and a creative potential:

*"...we must develop and use it. We have a choice. What we choose to do or not to do strengthens or weakens our belonging to creation, and moves us toward or away from realisation of our real being, our best form... We cannot escape from choosing or not choosing, no one can relieve a person from this responsibility for himself."*

- trans. Wolf and Stein, (1992)

## B 3

### QUESTIONS OF QUALITY AND INTEGRITY IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

New approaches to knowledge generation by action researchers have demanded new approaches to assessing the claims made by the research. This section explores how I have come to understand these issues in my search to establish a practice of quality and integrity. I draw on an action-reflection enquiry in which I lived the tensions of having work called to account by people judging it for different purposes to show how I have made sense of my own approach to validity. I consider it first through the idea that quality concerns should pervade all aspects of the research and second, through the use of structural frameworks. I begin with a discussion concerning the confusion over terminology.

#### **Terminology**

The terminology itself is under scrutiny. Should the word validity be reclaimed from the web of connotations from traditional scientific practice? Should its meaning as a 'regime of truth', that 'polices the borders between science and non-science' (Lather, 2001), be reconstructed in order to 'honour the generative, creative role of the human mind in all forms of knowing' (Heron, 1996). Should we say 'Farewell to Criteriology' (Schwandt, 1996), if this means a set of uniform measures, and find other terms, such as 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and 'Tests of Credibility' (Greenwood and Levin, 1998)? Exploring these arguments has helped me avoid the pitfall of finding answers that parody positivist concepts of validity, with its preference for generalisation, replication and standardisation and gaining validity only through its methods, regardless of worthiness, value and impact on people. I realised my need to make a final shift in conceptual thinking to remove the deeply entrenched remnants of internalised traditional notions of validity.

#### **Ensuring Quality in My Practice: A case study**

Quality and integrity are key words in my practice. If I explore my interpretation of these concepts, I see the **quality** of my work as a manifestation of the depth and breadth of the knowing I bring to it; the quality of attention in my relationships with co-participants, the boundaries of the context and the choices I make; and the skill with which I apply my various professional practices. Essential to this quality is the integrity of my practice. **Integrity** is judged by the congruence between all aspects of my practice and

the claims I make, and between my aspired action research practice and my espoused values. The choices I make as I practice need to be guided by the agreed purpose of a particular contract and context. This congruence also needs to be evident from the beginning to the end of the contract, and then in what I do with the information and learning I gain from it. For example, I follow the criteria laid down by Disaster Action ([www.disasteraction.org.uk](http://www.disasteraction.org.uk)) relating to personal information about disaster survivors. If contradictions arise, then the integrity would be exhibited either by knowing why exceptions had been made or by a willingness to be open to scrutiny, showing humility to admit mistakes and a desire to learn from them. I use the first-person enquiry methods described in B4 to monitor this congruence myself, while the second-person methods provide support and challenge from others.

I shall use a case study to highlight the dilemmas of practising in a volatile, emergent situation. I have called the story, 'Giving Myself Justice', my supervisor's phrase that became the mantra focussing my efforts to defend my work. It involved a short contract in 2002 with a national youth organisation who I had done work for intermittently for twelve years. The Child Protection Officer had asked me to 'sort out' a group of volunteers who had become enraged by the way the way a case of historic abuse had been handled by the organisation (see Story Box 2, overleaf). I knew that working with 'historic abuse' issues could leave me open to displaced anxieties in the organisation so I wanted to contract well. To do this, I kept the strategy, 'The Flow of Fourth Generation Evaluation' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:186-7) in mind. When the Child Protection Officer could not gain the full involvement of her senior managers, I was immediately faced with a quality issue: "Do I start the work knowing that the contract is poorly defined because of the organisational denial of the abuse issue?" I remembered the warning of the dangers for external consultants if they have to confront organisational defences (Argyris et al, 1985).

My social concern for the victims, and the issue in general, motivated my choice to continue. I therefore had to begin by working to my own set of quality standards, based on my values, professional and commercial integrity, and knowing that my contracting had been compromised by pragmatic considerations. To make up for this, I had to ensure that other qualities were in place, gained from knowledge of the issues and past experience, to strengthen our ability to deal with the guilt and complex mix of emotions and behaviours that this kind of work engenders. Quality was enhanced by introducing educative information and questions into our conversations to seek commitment and gain consensus about aims and boundaries, checking these constantly against the

## STORY BOX 2

### GIVING MYSELF JUSTICE

#### The Background Story: The work under scrutiny

*A senior volunteer in an organisation was about to be arrested in connection with allegations of historic sexual abuse of a number of young people in the 1970's - 1990's. I had specifically been asked to deal with a current, bitter conflict that had arisen between officers in the organisation and a group of volunteers, several of whom were family groups. They were heavily involved in the legal proceedings, they all knew or were related to victims, and the accused had been their long-standing colleague and family friend. The volunteers were very angry with the way the organisation had handled the case and officers had responded to them angrily.*

*There was an expectation that my colleague and I could resolve the problem with one 'counselling' session, but we argued our case and gained three days for the assessment work with the volunteers and other key groups who were essential to the resolution of the conflicts, after which recommendations would be made. On paper, this was a very short contract, lasting three days over a month plus a day of feedback that I demanded with senior managers a month later, in early 2003. In reality it was an all consuming piece of work which continued with pro bono telephone support to victims while they awaited follow-up action. When this did not happen quickly, I wrote a further report to raise management awareness about continuing concerns.*

*The work was incredibly difficult and complex, with on-going legal proceedings throwing up new information and issues. The dynamics between the many people involved were constantly changing and often took degenerative forms against the volunteers. Some officers clearly could not deal with abuse issues in a helpful manner and we were constantly trying to get senior officials to treat the issues and media interest seriously. Our working conditions were cold and dirty, and we worked long hours with little food and drink readily available"*

organisation's stated values and policies. Information about our professional code of conduct also had to be incorporated into these dialogues. Written records and note-taking, especially of verbatim comments and our own reactions, were the principal method of disciplined data collection. Tape-recording was out of the question for reasons of confidentiality and trust. My colleague and I also engaged in a great deal of critical enquiry of ourselves and each other, as well as seeking consultancy after the sessions, and the advice of specialist agencies on specific issues.

After each stage of the programme, we checked whether needs had been met and gained agreement about our next steps with the contracting officer, for example how to manage an official who objected to our challenge to his inappropriate jokes in the presence of the volunteers. After our final meeting with senior officers, a letter praising our efforts was received from the Chief Executive. The volunteer group, and the leader in particular, had nothing but gratitude for our work, since we had, in their words, 'restored their sanity, self-esteem and strength' and helped them deal constructively with their anger. Potential damage to the organisation had also been prevented because the group decided not to go to the media. Most stakeholders had used our brief time with them very constructively and one in particular, the only one to openly condemn the abuse and treatment of victims, proved to be an excellent supporter of our work. Several, who had been close colleagues of the accused, had continued their resistance and continued to attack the volunteer group with verbal insults and abusive letters. By most accounts, we had done a difficult job with quality, integrity and a great deal of courage worthy of Heron's validity criteria (Heron, 1996) described later.

But our involvement had not ended. Nearly a year later, a fundamental challenge to our work came from people who had never met us and had little idea of the work we had done. This focussed my thinking about validity issues. The central issue for me became, "How do I show (it felt more like prove) the quality of my work to powerful outside observers, and how do I give myself justice, especially so long after the event and when the chief observer appears to be seeking revenge because I dared to ask questions?"

The story continued when the organisation set up an Inquiry Panel about the handling of the case by the organisation. The sequence of events is complex and will not be detailed here, but I shall try to highlight the salient aspects relevant to this discussion. By a circuitous chain of events, the Panel chairman asked for my input to the Inquiry. This raised integrity questions about information given in confidence, so I asked for clarification of the nature of the process and how information would be treated. The questions produced an aggressive response and arrogant tone from the Chairman and a refusal to acknowledge my professional role. I consulted my professional body and was advised not to attend, resulting in more aggression and vindictiveness from the Chairman. I also began to realise that the Inquiry was inquisitorial in nature, not the process for learning and improvement of dealing with abuse cases as recommended in our report to the organisation. A few months later, I received extracts from the Panel's draft report containing a very unbalanced account of our work, with many inaccuracies

and conclusions based on little evidence. Some were defamatory about my professionalism and integrity in a legal sense. In particular I was being blamed for unprofessional conduct and 'harming' a member of the Volunteer group who I had never met.

To prevent myself responding reactively, I moved into action enquiry mode and asked for clarification about the unknown person and his letter of resignation that he had sent to two hundred people, including Royal patrons. This again produced aggressive e-mails from the Chairman and I had to draw on all my first- and second-person methods to maintain my integrity and keep asking questions. He grudgingly sent me a copy of the offending letter.

Ironically, the problem had arisen because of my insistence on following my rules of integrity and my values for pursuing social action and justice. After our contract had ended, the volunteers were left without further support, in spite of on-going legal proceedings and revelations. We felt our offer of pro bono telephone support was being abused so I took action to challenge the organisation's lack of action through one senior officer who appeared to be the only one to take the issues seriously. I had worked with her before and trusted her, so I took the perhaps unwise step of promising to send her a detailed account of our work, hoping this would help her fully understand the issues that needed to be solved. But first I wanted the Volunteer group to give their permission and check for confidentiality issues. This sharing of control of information with co-participants proved to be risky. Though I had emphasised that only those who attended the sessions should see it, the group member who had declined to take part was given a copy and was enraged by the account of problems caused by the labelling of the volunteer group by senior officials as 'irrational, over-emotional, vindictive and unintelligent'. The letter of resignation resulted in which he listed sixteen reasons why the organisation had failed, ending with the reference above as the last straw and naming the source, '*a report written by Elizabeth Capewell*'.

My own assessment of the consequences of our and the letter writer's actions conflicted with that of the Panel Chairman. Rather than harming the absentee volunteer, I saw that we had indirectly enabled him to find his voice. Whereas our rational appeals to HQ had brought little active response, he had managed to get them to take notice at last, though only to preserve the system, not improve conditions for abused clients. Those who had been to our sessions had learned to channel their anger in less emotive ways. I understood the dynamics of the situation in terms of the



organisation being unable to face their own discomfort, having been unsettled by this public exposure of misdemeanours. As an external person who had exposed and named many reprehensible features of the conflict, I was a convenient scapegoat on which they could offload the guilt they could not bear.

I was faced with several dilemmas in countering the accusations made against me. How, for example, could I give myself justice and prevent inaccurate, defamatory statements being printed in an open document, whilst also keeping everything in perspective in relation to time, energy and costs. I attempted to use an enquiring approach and learnt that enquiry and dialogue can only occur when both parties want to co-operate in a search for a similar goal. Every enquiring question I posed increased the level of attack from the Chairman, with threats that more adverse comments would appear in the final report. My anxieties escalated and I was aware I was being drawn into a battle I had no wish to enter, nor time or money to deal with properly. Our initial contracting and on-going consultations throughout the contract meant little to the Panel Chairman since he had not been involved in making them and had only a narrow view of what the work was really about and the difficulties of working with volatile situations and people. I could only engage in good quality facilitation of myself.

Another dilemma was how to validate the quality and integrity of our work without sounding defensive about actions that were in being attacked on false premises. Too much protestation of innocence might be seen as a sign of guilt. My solution was to give the Panel enough of my time to hold my ground and to state my position as clearly, fully and honestly as I could without being drawn into the many false suppositions that were, in the opinion of one volunteer officer, '*Aunt Sallies*' set up in order to knock us down. I also had to learn how to give justice to myself without wishing ill will on the adversary, (a hard but necessary task for maintaining my integrity), yet without feeling obliged to rescue or give justice to the Panel or the organisation – that was their business. I noticed that to validate my position, I drew most of all on our contractual agreements and those written later to clarify aims and record changes agreed as new events emerged. I had insisted that the key contracting officer participated in the programme so that the values and aims of the organisation could be referred to when necessary. We made our own values clear as we proceeded and checks were made between all parties before final decisions were made. Maintaining quality was an integral part of the process, and it was our attention to this that contributed to my greatest feeling of despair- that we could be subjected to such personal attacks in spite of doing so.

Having made our case, the report was finalised and presented to the local Volunteer Group. The defamatory remarks had been deleted, but so had all the favourable remarks and nothing had been added about the main body of our work. The volunteer group and others were similarly dissatisfied about the way their submissions had been ignored or misrepresented. After a great deal of self-enquiry, I made a decision to withdraw all communication and involvement with the organisation. I knew that if I was drawn in any more to the dysfunctions of this organisation, I, as a small external organisation, would always be vulnerable to being the depository for anything they found too painful to address. The organisation had wanted quiet victims, not empowered ones. The senior officials distributing the damaging statements about the volunteer group had been protected, as had another who had broken child protection guidelines but was still the person who people had to go to with suspicions. This was an organisation that preferred to hide difficult issues and would become more adversarial to protect their name. With the support of people we had empowered, I withdrew knowing I had done what I could to 'give myself justice'.

Higher questions of integrity in relation to a wider social justice issue remained to trouble me: *"Should I have taken more action to expose the fact that the officer who had contravened the Child Protection rules remained in post? Would I feel I had colluded with a culture in which abuse was likely to go undetected because people would not speak out for fear of being vilified like our volunteer group?"* I reasoned that I had done more than originally asked to do, I was not responsible for solving all the problems in the organisation and, most importantly, I knew that we had increased the capacity within the organisation at several levels for the matter to be pursued internally. A well respected senior volunteer had assured me he would pursue the remaining issues through the Trustees and, if necessary, the Charity Commission. I therefore chose to trust that the process towards justice would go on without me.

Reflecting on this experience reminded me that much of my work thrusts me at some point into a role described by my Irish friend as 'the poet in the ditch'. When working in ditches with a great deal of mess and dirt created by anger, guilt, shame, fear and stress, even the highest quality work and integrity can be hidden or distorted by grime. It may only really be validated by those who were part of the experience and were committed to agreed goals. If someone is intent on being vindictive and destructive, it is easy for them to take a narrow view of what they see and manipulate evidence to meet their intended goal, especially if they carry organisational and economic power.

Perhaps the greatest validation of our work is that we were prepared to be there at all, that we know when to get out and we are willing to work in other 'ditches' again when needed. The injustices against us are more than balanced by the trusting relationships we build with our clients suffering injustice, and with friends that stand by when some of the mud we work in sticks and besmirches us. It is a question of whose validity criteria is valued most.

### **Bringing rigour to emergent, messy practice**

Most of my practice is composed of pieces of work that, like the work above and the story in Part E3, are inherently messy and emergent, usually small parts of a bigger process with contracts set up in a hurry, without well defined goals and boundaries. Helping people to get systems moving again, usually in far from ideal situations, is not a linear process. Discovering ways of evaluating this type of work is an on-going process in which I continue to be engaged, especially with colleagues who are bound by narrow definitions of validity by external monitoring agencies. For my own purposes, I draw on two types of quality criteria for maintaining quality and integrity:

- **Quality checks as an ongoing process:** checks that go right through the action research, being evident in the presence and attention I bring to my work and the quality of the interactions I conduct with others
- **Quality or validity frameworks:** checks using the systematic use of external frameworks devised from the underlying values and principles of action research.

I shall deal with each of these in turn.

### **Quality Checks as an Ongoing Process**

Quality questions need to be an integral part of methodology throughout the research. Marshall (2004) has exemplified this by noting her quality choices as her narrative unfolds (p. 306), a useful model for the story-telling approach I have adopted in this thesis. Generated knowledge is more likely to be valid and authentic if 'truth is developed in a communicative process' (Kvale, 1995) where people learn and change through their dialogue. Lincoln believes that criteria should be encouraged 'to grow indigenously as a natural consequence of the inquiry effort' and calls for a 'profusion of validities responsive to the immediate inquiry and its context' (Lincoln, 1995). One of my first tasks, from individual to organisational levels, is to discover what people want to be different as a result of our work together so we can produce realistic, relevant goals (given their context and, for example, the limits of their employment contract) with

criteria of success that they understand. If validity is a concern throughout, a rigour is given to practice while it is in motion. Many of the skills and attitudes that contribute to first-person inquiry have this capacity, such as skills of **critical subjectivity** (Reason, 1981), the **self-referencing rules** suggested by Chandler and Torbert (2003), Whitehead's **self-reflection questions** (McNiff et al 1996) and Judi Marshall's concept of '**inquiry as life process**' (Marshall, 1999). Validity is also gained by the enrichment that reflexivity gives to accounts, exposing the struggles of internal processes and dynamics. This is a self-regulating validity that questions and challenges one's comfort zones and actions.

In the example above, I built quality into the process through the constant checking of goals, expectations and progress of all the people we worked with, along with impromptu conflict resolution sessions when differences arose. Our final arbiters were my contract and the stated values of the organisation underlain by my own professional codes and personal integrity. As in much of my work, the absence of serious involvement in the contracting by senior personnel limits what can be achieved, but I still aim to maintain high quality within the limitations. The comments we receive from our clients, and the changes in their facial expressions and posture, attest to the quality of attention they received which enabled them to be heard, empowered and moved into forward action rather than despair and inaction. For example, Elton, a young Kosovan refugee who had survived torture and a perilous journey to England, only to be violently tied to a tree at gunpoint in a raid on a fast-food store in Essex, told my colleague after his session with me, *"I can see it in her eyes – I feel safe to talk "*. In another incident, an 18 year old young man from a run-down south London estate who had been held at gun-point in a raid, turned to me after our session and said, *"You know, I really do appreciate what you've given us. You help us see things we wouldn't realise ourselves."* After another 4-gun armed robbery incident, a no-nonsense Franchisee, said of our sessions, *"I didn't really believe in this kind of stuff, but now I've seen its value – you've taken the burden of what the robbery did to my staff off my shoulders."*

As a practitioner who researches as part of practice, not just for itself, **usefulness and practicability** are extremely important to me. The contentious issue is who decides what is useful and worthwhile, whether a balance can be met between competing demands as part of the process or, if this is impossible, how choices are made and against which criteria. As in the case described above, I have to address such issues when needs of a group or individual conflict with the needs of the organisation

employing me, taking many factors to do with my legal contract as well as my contract with my own values and professional standards.

Turning from actual practice to verbal and written accounts of my practice, consideration must be given to how believable they are to readers. Two of the criteria I most value are taken from John McLeod's classification of tests developed for quantitative research, (McLeod, 1994) drawn from many sources. These are **experiential authenticity** and **catalytic validity** (cited as Kvale's criteria, 1983). The former describes the degree to which my accounts can be believed by others by how I tell them and how well they communicate empathy (emotional experiential knowing) alongside detailed cognitive knowledge of a subtle kind. The spirit of 'deep-participation' described by Reason (1994) must be evident. I know I have achieved this when people with 'inside' knowledge of disaster recognise the authenticity of what I have written, all the more so when they can then make better sense of their own experience as a result. My first public account of my work at Hungerford (Scott, 1988) rang so true to the experience of staff dealing with the Lockerbie disaster that they invited me there, thus providing the spark to my future career. This feedback given to me by a Californian colleague illustrates how such a tacit quality as authenticity can be acknowledged:

*"I have had the opportunity to observe your facilitation style on several occasions (and in several countries). They were all different, but shared a remarkable similarity.*

*Picture this:*

*'150 school psychologists, counselors, and teachers from the New York City schools at a major school crisis management training. Elizabeth is asked to speak to them on short notice, and give her impressions of the state of school crisis management internationally. She quietly and unassumingly walks to the front of the lecture hall and sits down on a stool. Instead of dazzling them with an action packed power point presentation, she speaks to them as individuals, each sharing her pilgrimage, her walk towards . . . towards wherever it is that we are all supposed to be heading in this lifetime. She shares facts and experiences, feelings and truths in such a manner that all 150 people are enchanted by her, and her journey. 150 of New York's finest warriors, normally intense and boisterous are entranced. Somehow the time disappears and when they are suddenly applauding, they carry with them a sense of her, her work, their work, and themselves.'*

*I can't boil it down into more objective parameters than this, unless by "objective" you mean that all who observed it would nod up and down at the same time. And that's about what happened."*

- E-mail from Dr Kendall Johnson, 14 February, 1999

Achieving **catalytic validity** (Kvale, 1983) or Fetterman's similar **Empowerment Evaluation** approach (Fetterman, 2001) is particularly important to my personal hopes for my work – that people will discover their own power to make choices. Such changes can be discerned in the written accounts and verbal feedback of participants, but mainly in the changes in attitude and behaviour, especially their commitment to action. My story in Part E3 of this thesis exemplifies this, when the Chairman of the Board of Governors changed his actions once our work and information had helped him fully assume the power of his role. He then used this power to influence his community and progress our work with the school and Education Authorities.

My final guide to quality and integrity is the question, *"Can I live with myself if I do this or act in that way, and can I live with myself if I don't"*. At Hungerford and in many pieces of work since, I have acted according to this rule at the expense of my own career or other commercial interests. In situations where I sense a culture of blame and mistrust, my contracting and work is also guided by legal considerations and having the kind of records and evidence that would back my claims, as in the example cited above.

### **External quality and validity frameworks**

External frameworks that guide and inform my choices act as critical consultants to sustain the quality of my work in motion. In particular, the framework of validity questions described by Reason and Bradbury (2001:12) and based on the core components of action research enables me to check how far my aspirations to work in an action research mode are being achieved. I kept these questions in mind in the example of practice above and I shall give a brief indication (in italics) of how they were demonstrated:

- **Quality as relational praxis:** is the work explicit in developing participative and democratic relationships, such as those between initiators and participants? *By insisting on a partnership of stakeholders, so that the volunteer group was not further pathologised as the 'problem'*

- **Quality as practical outcome:** is the work validated through new ways of doing and being? Does it work? Are they useful and life enhancing for the people involved? *Group A learnt how to rise above the projections placed on them by others in the organisation. They learnt to channel their anger and found different ways of expressing and using it.*
- **Quality as conceptual-theoretical integrity:** is good theory anchored to experience and to practice? *I drew on past experience, especially of the dynamics of agencies dealing with abuse (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000), and theories of group dynamics (Randall & Southgate, 1980), crisis management and conflict resolution, as well as action research. I also chose my co-facilitator because of her expertise in child abuse issues.*
- **Quality as plurality of ways of knowing:** are experiential, aesthetic, imaginal, empirical, propositional, practical and other ways of knowing drawn on appropriately? *We relied a great deal on our own experiential knowing and the parallel processes between the issues at the heart of the problem and what we were experiencing in the inter-actions with the organisation and different parts of it. Group dialogues were used to generate knowledge, and the various forms of knowing favoured by participants were validated and used. Our multi-dimensional coping models ensure that knowing from many channels of being are used in our work and in our work to increase coping and behaviour strategies of participants strategies.*
- **Quality methodological appropriateness:** are choices of method appropriate and congruent with values and purposes? Is the research well crafted in its own terms? *The methods used to help participants generate knowledge about their situation and future were also our means of practice. We chose methods congruent with the haphazard situation, the distressed state of participants and the poor physical working environment. We had to craft messy situations to harness opportunities and make them work towards the needs emerging. For example, our work had been so badly presented by managers to the volunteers, only a few were going to attend. By the end of the day after building trust and confidence, others were encouraged to attend and many more came to the following session.*
- **Quality as worthwhile work:** does the work explicitly address questions of value and significance? Does it contribute to wider concerns of humanity? *It attended to the socially important question of child abuse and victimisation of victims..*
- **Quality as emergence:** is the work self-organising over time and developing toward enduring consequences? Is it emergent, evolutionary and educational? *The last sentence describes what we did very well. I know that many of the consequences have brought about change for people's lives. I am less sure about the organisation*

*and its ability to learn from, rather than deny, real issues. In a short time we did our work robustly enough to raise awareness and give opportunities to change. I believe that some of our recommendations, which were included in the Inquiry report without attribution, may be taken up including the power relationship between the organisation's Executive and the powerful Volunteer sector. Attitudes of some people are unlikely to change, but it is their right to choose this route.*

More recently, the comprehensive '27-flavor typology' of action research possibilities (Chandler and Torbert, 2003; Torbert, lecture, July 2002) has provided another useful structure showing how quality can be assessed by the degree of differentiation and integration of three dimensions:

- time (past, present and future)
- research voice (subjective, inter-subjective multiple and objective generalised)
- practice (first-, second- and third-person methods).

Other concepts developed by Torbert (summarised in Torbert, 2001: 250-260) can be integrated within this frame as additional checks on quality, for example the degree to which the enquiry has worked across, and created multiple feed-back loops between, his four territories of experience— vision, strategy, action and outcomes and triple-loop learning and feedback (p. 254). In retrospect, the case presented above achieved many of these requirements in embryonic form even in the short time available. We enquired into past history in order to help the participant and the organisation understand more of itself and deal with the present conflicts. We then provided opportunities in which they could create different ways of behaving in the future. The work moved across different levels of experience, from personal to interpersonal to organisational, in order to give attention to interdependent parts and help each hear the stories of the other. We attempted to work not just at the level of individual behaviour change, but also opened up questions about timing, strategy and fundamental assumptions about child abuse, the implementation of policies and the culture of the organisation.

Within these broader frameworks, other specific guides to quality can be used, including scientific validity tests where appropriate. I shall not go into all in detail but will list some below:



1. Heron's methods for evaluating quality in the of facilitation of **co-operative inquiry** programmes (Heron, 1996)
2. Yoland Wadsworth's **criteria for collaboration** (Wadsworth, 2001)
3. Madeline Church and colleagues work on evaluating the quality (internal process and external influence) of **international networks** (Church et al, 2003)
4. Tests for quality participation in **participative action research (PAR)** (Fals-Borda, 1996:10-14, 2001:27-37 and Gaventa, 2001:70-80)
5. Statistical tests of validity for **quantitative data**, undertaken within an action research framework, as for example, those used in the Newbury Community Epidemiology Study that I initiated (Capewell, 1998c).

From this list, I shall take Heron's criteria for evaluating co-operative inquiry and show how I practised these in the work described in the story above. I am, of course, applying Heron's criteria to a different situation from the formal Co-operative Inquiry groups for which they were designed. My work is too emergent and haphazard for formal groups, but I find using such criteria holds my practice together. In other parts of my work, I am often the only continuous presence in the informal networks I create so it is important that I use the criteria of 'other voices' as an invisible consultant constantly checking what I do and where I deviate so I can critically scrutinise my choices. This does not prevent the individual groups and networks from devising their own quality criteria as well.

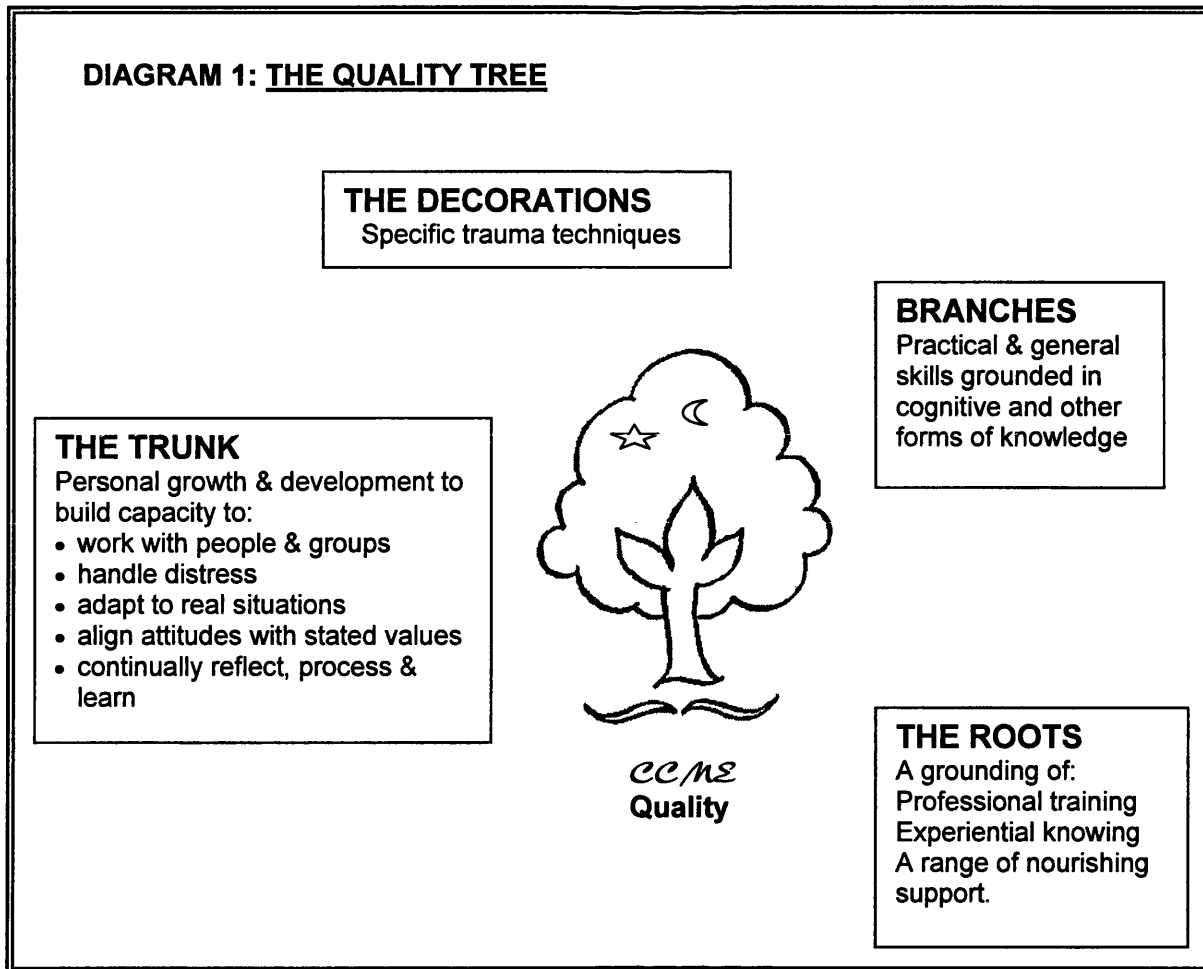
For a quality inquiry, Heron suggests the following should be present. My illustrations follow in italics:

- **Research cycling** – the constant cycling between action and reflection, the topic as a whole and different aspects of it, singly and in combination, from different angles, developing different ideas, trying different ways of behaving. *Reflection was built into the process with my co-facilitator and between ourselves and 'stakeholders'.*
- **Divergence and convergence** –co-researchers will look several times at the same issue (convergent) and look at different issues on successive cycles (divergent). *This contract gave me an opportunity to experience a different form of crisis (divergence) and to compare it with other situations involving abuse, both in this organisation and others (convergence, with an element of divergence).*
- **Authentic collaboration** – each group member is fully and authentically engaged in each action and reflection phase, with equality in how they express themselves, are heard, and contribute to decision-making. *A constant theme was to gain equality*

*and re-balance power relationships between different parts of the organisation. We facilitated real-time conflicts as they happened, thus working with authentically engaged participants.*

- **Challenging consensus collusion** – procedures that challenge forms of collusion, such as false assumptions, unaware projections distorting the inquiry process. *Much of our work involved unravelling projections and collusions that had created the conflicts, the scape-goating of the volunteer group and resistance to change.*
- **Managing distress** – arousal of anxiety and distress is an inevitable part when enquiring into the human condition. *The whole contract involved managing different forms of distress from the primary incident, its repercussions and what our work was revealing.*
- **Reflection and action** - having an appropriate balance between action and reflection to avoid the extremes of 'armchair theorising' and 'activism' for its own sake. *Even in the midst of a haphazard situation, we insisted on brief periods of reflection and modelled this during our work, especially with emotionally charged groups.*
- **Chaos and order** – moving between order and chaos is a common feature of any group process and an inevitable if the group is to be creative. *There was a great degree of chaos from the outset and we worked to bring about order to achieve the task, except where it was safe to allow chaos to reach its own resolution.*

My continuing concern with validity, quality and integrity issues comes mainly from the value I place on doing high quality work with integrity. The underlying foundation of this is the preparation, training and on-going development supporting my practice, as represented in Diagram 1 on the following page. This shows that if I am deeply rooted in my beliefs and values, and well supported by my professional training, then the branches and leaves, the various general methods and skills will grow naturally from them and be applied with wisdom, so that new techniques can be hung on the tree with confidence. Good fruit grows from such trees if attention is given to all parts of the system.

**DIAGRAM 1: THE QUALITY TREE**

I have learnt, however, that good practice guided by values of integrity can still lead to problems with people whose status quo is challenged them. There have been just a few occasions where I have been called to account in this way and the final test of validity is whether I can honestly live with myself if I act or if I don't. The Hungerford situation and the story in Box 1 provided me with major challenges where my work was being judged positively by the people I was primarily there to support, but negatively by senior managers in the organisation who had been discomforted by it. This gave me a strong understanding that evaluations of quality depend on the views, experiences and underlying motivations and re-stimulated emotional distress of the people making them. The repercussions after the Hungerford work meant I could not maintain my integrity by staying in an organisation whose priorities were so different from my own, so I resigned knowing that my work was valued by the people who really mattered to me. However, this view did not stop me from putting my practice under scrutiny to look at how things could have been done differently.

## B 4

### MY ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*"Useful research knowledge is not manufactured by the mechanical application of method. Rather, method is used to assist the basic human impulse to know and learn."*

- John McLeod (1994)

What follows demonstrates the amount of awareness, thought, and discipline that go into the making of my strategic path. It is indeed a life-long living process engaging both the personal and professional. As Marshall (2001) points out, it is also a highly political business and full of potential danger, as my first trainees in action research discovered when they began to ask enquiring questions in their organisations.

I have wanted to find methods which can be used by any practitioner in volatile conditions with little time and few resources so that no one need be excluded from being practice-based action researchers. I shall present the methods I most often use with their benefits and problems. Reference will be made to experiments I conducted with particular methods. I shall use the first, second and third person classification of Reason and Torbert (2001) to give some structure, recognising that this is not to be used rigidly. How I bring these methods into a synthesis of practice will be described in Part E.

I have no easy labels for my methodology except to say that I tend to "make my path as I walk it", a phrase used by several people such as the poet, Antonio Machado, (1875-1939), Horton & Freire (1990) and Varela (1986). This can be dismissed as a lack of method, incoherent, ill-disciplined and making things up on some irrational whim. I view it as a pragmatic, well informed quality response to highly contextual and unpredictable situations for the active generation of knowledge in a newly developing field. I noticed my defensive attempts to parallel and gain credibility with the professionals from a traditional scientific perspective who I observed colonising my community-based area of practice. I had to heed the warning of Marshall not "to create alternative orthodoxies, [rather than] engaging with the dilemmas of fully living... action-based forms of researching." (Marshall, 2001). My growing confidence as an action

researcher has encouraged me to reclaim the place for a style more suited to working with and for communities (Capewell, 1999)

Another challenge for me involved the exclusion I felt when I heard CARPP colleagues referring to methods I had never heard of, such as Ladders of Inference and Learning Histories. I discovered these methods were similar to my unpackaged ones and my cynical response was, 'Is that all they are?'. Having looked behind the labels, I appreciated the limits of my 'natural', unframed methods were limited. Having wandered around in a 'cloud of unknowing', with an intention to discover, I sensed, explored and mapped the territory from many angles until some wisdom came out of my confusion. Teaching action research to others then tested and consolidated my understanding. Students demanded a menu of methods and, while I could appreciate their need, I also saw the danger of creating a new elitism between packaged and labelled methods of the corporate and academic world, and those created by lay co-participants out of the stream of action research. My own struggles help me retain an empathy with people who feel excluded by the technical terms and even by the word 'research'.

My methods have been chosen for their ability to create useful knowledge as I integrate research into my practice. They also have to be congruent with my values and beliefs about the world, how I believe people come to know it and what will be done with what we discover. Thus, I reject 'methodolatry' (Bergin and Garfield, 1994), in favour of a strategy of multiple methods which enable people to create their own methods and knowledge. I am also averse to using standardised methods that control the questions that can be asked and the type of data that can be valued.

Two ideas in particular helped me find a flexible way of grouping methods. First, that action research could be a strategy of actions and choices made with awareness and intent and, second, the grouping of methods by Reason and Torbert (2001) into first, second and third person practice as described in B2. I drew up a table, too long and complex to include here, of all the strategies and methods I used in my action cycles with different disasters and types of work. I found that the majority of my work had been undertaken as a practitioner integrating action research as a **strategy of practice**. The research and action were dynamically and continuously informing each other in a moving spiral with methods becoming both the research and action. The Youth Crime project I co-ordinated in Bath (Bath YCSC, 1992), was the only time research was specifically required by sponsors and seen as an integral part of the strategy to develop

practical action and solutions. This is the only time I have been commissioned, funded and supported by an external agency to undertake what was essentially an action research project.

Trying to separate first-, second- and third- person research on this table was extremely difficult, but I concluded that first-person methods were always present, various forms of second- person methods were commonly present (though few were formal collaborative groups), and there was always an aspiration for third-person research, even if an opportunity was not found to achieve it fully. The story in E3 illustrates how my practice emerged as an integrated strategy moving from a meeting with one woman and spreading out to become a mechanism for engaging with wider social and political systems, not dissimilar to my Peasedown project (Story Box 1).

## **FIRST-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH**

*"Self-reflection is the school of wisdom."*

- Gracián (1601 - 1658); Spanish philosopher.

First- person methods are the tools of personal research and the foundation of all action research. They involve the inward exploration of inward beliefs, thoughts and feelings and outward reflection on action to increase awareness and congruence between action choices and desired results. Marshall has termed these 'inner and outer arcs of attention' (Marshall, 2001:433-4). Because they are often used on micro-time scales 'in the moment of action', they might better be described as skills but skills used as a methodical strategy for an overriding intent to enquire into the improvement of practice. These methods seek answers to the questions of the kind drawn from Reason (Training course notes):

- Who is the 'I' engaged in this project? What purposes are important to me? What do I believe is worth enquiring into?
- What biases and frames do I bring? Which am I unable to move out of?
- What are my patterns of behaviour? Am I flexible, diplomatic and outrageous, cunning and simple, wise and foolish?
- How do I embody my values in my work?
- Am I awake to what is happening in the world around me?

- Do I bring a quality of attention which seeks out and corrects incongruities between purposes, frames, behaviour, and the outside world?
- As I inquire into my own conduct, am I able to invite others to inquire with me?

### **Fundamental concepts**

Fundamental to first-person practice are the two concepts of Critical Subjectivity and Action Inquiry that I shall now consider.

#### **Concept 1: Critical Subjectivity**

The concept of **critical subjectivity** (Reason and Rowan, 1981) is congruent with a subjective-objective world-view where the relationship of the subjective experience to the world around is crucial to understanding human situations. It allows me to be authentically engaged in the research as a human being, yet, by having a critical subjectivity, I can be aware of and deal with any biases, past distress, anxieties, social and political pressures that may cloud my view. Though complete objectivity is impossible (Marshall and Reason, 1998), a critical eye and enquiring inner voice can notice and expose distortions so that actions can be changed. The knowing remains grounded in its source, but is not consumed by the experience. Like a choreographer, a dance inspired by an intense personal experience can only be communicated to and danced by others after being crafted using professional technique and expertise. Having a tendency to being over critical of myself, other terms such as **disciplined subjectivity** coined by Erikson (1958, quoted in Schön, 1983) and Schön's own term, the '**reflective practitioner**' (1983) remind me that the critical eye can be appreciative and is not an authoritarian judge.

#### **Concept 2: Action Inquiry**

Torbert's **action inquiry** (1991, 2004; Chandler & Torbert, 2003), based on **action science** (Argyris and Schön, 1974), has been a core part of my methodology. This discipline focuses reflection on action to create transformations in the moment of action and develops an attention that spans purpose, strategies, behaviour and consequences (Fisher et al, 2000, Torbert, 2001). The detailed attention that has to be paid to the process of each action as it happens is particularly relevant to my work in situations where everything is in turmoil and where I am initially unfamiliar with both the context and the people. Any elements that are incongruent with beliefs, actions and intentions can be harmonised to produce the effects desired. Creating conversations that encourage and teach people to move from reactivity to reflection to useful action forms a large part of my work.

As an illustration of my use of action inquiry, Story Box 3 below contains an extract from a much longer account (Capewell, 2002a) of work with a staff team in a fast-food franchise following an armed robbery.

### **STORY BOX 3**

#### **Using Action Inquiry to Transform a Critical Moment in a Post-trauma Session**

*The first critical moment occurred when the alarms went off several times in rapid succession during the group session. Several group members became tearful and shook uncontrollably, as if they were actually back in the trauma, demonstrating our teaching about the reactivation of symptoms by a sensory reminder of the incident. One woman became very angry at the frequent ringing of the alarms. I attended to my own anxieties and chose to use the incident to teach self-calming through breathing, self-talk, imagination, posture and finding support. I noticed that the angry woman, 'Kim' did not really settle and guessed from the look in her eye and her defensive posture that she was not satisfied. I had to make an instant choice to ignore or attend to her needs and I chose to stop the session and focus on her. This rapid intuitive decision was based on her past trauma history given in the individual pre-group session interview, my theoretical knowledge of trauma reactions, my own experiential understanding of the cynicism created by previous trauma that produces a determination never to be fobbed off by techniques. I shared my hypothesis with her and helped work out a strategy so that she did not 'go on alert' when the alarm rang as if a raid was about to happen. The shift manager explained that the alarm had been set to go off every time the back door was opened as a safety measure. The woman's face and body relaxed visibly – she had been convinced. The need for a different, less re-traumatising system was recorded, and the lessons about dealing with hyper-arousal and the power of reminders needed no more explanation. The angry woman had also taken the first step in learning that resolving issues could be more productive than hanging on to her anger, as she had done for many reasons since the raid. Her praise of our work compared with the help received for her previous traumas was high.*

– Taken from my account, 2002

This story shows just how many 'in the moment reflections' were made as we worked with our own and the teams' process and dealt with interruptions and emerging issues, conflicts and a second armed robbery. As with the stories in Box 1 and section E3, this one began with one woman, and grew until the affected staff group and then the whole system were engaged in the process work essential to her recovery and the recovery



of other staff and team. I found it hard to choose one extract from the interconnected whole, but the extract shows how I used first-person action inquiry to notice a critical moment within a second-person method and turn into one of several transformative conversations that demonstrated a different way of dealing with anger.

First person methods are at the core of what I do and help me check quality as I proceed, especially at times when it is difficult to engage formally with others. I am the only person who can carry my learning from experience to experience, from one place to another, so first person methods are essential to developing my whole practice. For disaster work situations, my preference is for methods requiring little or no technology that use my own inner and physical resources, along with paper, pen and materials for creative expression. Developing my capacity to use the methods is an on-going process. Using these two concepts as constant threads, I have created a variety of methods and skills to research myself and it is to these I turn now.

### **Specific first-person action research methods and skills**

Having logged the methods I most commonly use, I looked for underlying themes and chose to group them according to their dominant purpose. These methods, listed below, represent the progression of enquiry needed to take the action researcher from a state of tacit awareness to outward action in the world.

**Group A:** Methods for enhancing my presence in experience.

**Group B:** Methods for stepping out of an experience while still living it.

**Group C:** Methods for recording data during or soon after an experience.

**Group D:** Methods for making sense of experience in a wider framing.

**Group E:** Methods for transforming experiences and planning future action.

I shall now expand on these methods in detail.

### **Group A: First-person methods for enhancing my presence in experience.**

#### **A.i. Meditative practices**

These have been an aspiration rather than a fully practised discipline in any particular form. I have received instruction in several forms such as Christian meditation, Chan Buddhism, Sufi practices, Tai Chi and Reiki. Group and active meditations have suited me best, perhaps because the group situation makes the discipline easier to sustain. I use the methods as a means of:

- creating the conditions for more effective first person research
- grounding myself before a stressful event

- clearing my mind and attuning myself to the people and environment I am engaging with
- self-nourishment and care during and after stressful work
- changing my defensive attitude before meeting a potentially hostile group or situation. (I often find when I do this my fears are not realised.)

Some of my deepest insights shaping my work and life have emerged from these practices. For example, the images gained on my first Zen Buddhist retreat in 1986 were the 'stem cells' for my Trauma Process Model. Other Zen practices were important in the attention I could give to my daughter through her process of dying. It is on occasions of intense emotion such as this and immediately after major trauma that I experience 'going beyond myself', tapping into forms of awareness I do not yet understand and channel an energy that is greater than me.

#### **A.ii. Yoga of Participation**

One meditative method devised by Skolimowski (1994) from his yoga of participation involves 'approaching a natural object with reverence, communing with it in silence to attempt to identify with its form of consciousness and way of experiencing the world' (Heron, 1996). When I was first taught the method at a CARPP conference, I remember being asked to close my eyes after the engagement and notice what imprints were left as images. I have adapted this method for engagement with human situations. The imprints, transposing into symbols, that the group or relationship leaves on my mind enables me in an instant to access other dimensions for consideration I may not otherwise have noticed.

#### **A.iii. Rituals and other methods gained from therapeutic training**

The more I practice, the more I realise the importance of rituals for a fuller engagement with an experience. The ritual can provide a safe boundary so that physical and emotional distractions can be left behind. For example, rituals can be made from marking the beginning, the points of transition and the end of an experience or from defining the space physically or mentally. Many methods from psychotherapy have a ritualistic form that can be used, for example to crystallise or emphasise a particular experience so that it can be experienced again more fully. The method I most use is to give a feeling or experience some form, such as a colour, shape, sound or voice, so that I can set up a dialogue with it to discover its nature. The predictable frame of the ritual allows unknown experiences to be approached with less anxiety, for example in

training session where I want participants to have some idea of working in volatile situations. I also used a ritual walk to enable me to cope with, and explore my experience of, living with the uncertainty of my daughter's illness:

*"Being attentive to every step I took, I walked up the volcanic outlier on the edge of Dartmoor to the ancient chapel of St Michael de Rupe perched on top. The colours and messages of the setting sun and the stained glass windows sustained me through the sudden turn of events and her death a few days later. The walk allowed the experience to come more fully into my awareness so that it could be transformed into a source of nourishment"*

#### **A.iv. Methods for stepping out of an experience while still living in it**

I have used a range of methods as a first step to noticing and enquiring into the nature of my relationship with the experience prior to making cognitive sense and meaning from purely sensory perceptions. In terms of brain processes, these methods form the first stages of processing and storing sensory images as verbally accessible material (Turnbull, lecture notes, 2003), one aim of post-trauma recovery work.

The co-counselling method of **Identity checking** (Evison & Horobin, 1988:100) is useful for checking how far an experience of a person has been fuelled by reactivated emotions connected with someone from the past so that the two people can be separated and the new one respected in their own right. Simple **Gestalt therapy techniques** (Parlett & Hemmings, 1996), for example making statements about a person or situation such as 'I know, I imagine, I am aware of' help me observe in a more systematic and attentive manner. Using **metaphor** and images aid my reflection on the experience as I live it. Such images include having one foot in the pool of experience and the other in the pool of reflection, or the image of having a wise consultant on one's shoulder. I have also trained myself to take quick reflective breaks during an experience to research and maintain my attentiveness. Regular practice has meant that I can use the **multi-modal coping model** (BE FIT & Phys, see section D3) rapidly to scan the channels of my experiencing very quickly and make changes if necessary. Similarly, I can use my **trauma process model** (see Part C) at points when I catch myself moving into downward spirals of reaction or negative thinking to remind myself there is always an alternative.

## **Group B: First-person methods for recording data during or soon after an experience**

My methods of recording data require the capacity to allow the process of action research to be communicated with richness and authenticity and to capture the subtleties of the 'here and now' before they are forgotten. Those too subtle to be captured accurately can only be recorded through the transformations they produce. Examples are:

### **B.i. Written records**

**Journaling** is a method I have used for personal reflection during intensive experiential training, periods of therapy, and once as examination coursework. **Professional note-taking** tends to take over from Journals during professional engagements, though after a stressful day of non-stop disaster work, I find it difficult to write anything so use key words, symbols and sketches instead to jog my memory later. I tend to combine the personal with professional note-taking in one exercise book, keeping one side free for reflective comments and notes. To improve my note-taking choices and skills, I have been influenced by Judi Marshall's self-reflective inquiry practices (Marshall, 1981, 1999, 2001). In particular, her writing has made me revalue my natural ability for internal multiple tracking of myself and developing it into a more disciplined craft, improving the way notes and choices of what is noted, are recorded.

My colleague Sue Pittman instilled in me the discipline of keeping **Time-lines** as 'real-time' records has been a successful discipline for me in recording the myriad of process and recovery tasks of my work as an on-going process. In work involving abuse and suicide it is vital I track and stay alert to the complex dynamics and displaced emotions in rapidly changing situations. At the end of each session I can use these records as a reflective tool with my colleagues and with our clients. All of them can be used to understand the whole process in evaluations at the end of the contract or each phase when deciding how to continue. They are therefore an important tool for maintaining quality and integrity, as well as evidence for external monitors.

The edited extract of a ten page Time-Line in Table 2 on the following page is an example, chosen because it is one of the simpler incidents I have attended. It records our actions and feelings as the response to a suspicious death of a young male resident of a Children's Home developed.

TABLE 2: AN EXAMPLE OF A TIME-LINE

<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTIONS</u>	<u>REFLECTIONS</u>
Thursday breakfast	Planning with colleague	Less apprehensive after briefing & planning with Director of SSD on drive from the airport.
Children's Home 9.00am	Shown round Home Introduction to some staff first impressions re the Home's culture	Tense atmosphere, strained faces. Noticed evidence of impending change – boxes etc.
9.15	Meeting with Manager. Dialogue: Information gathering -assessed impact of the death on circles of vulnerability and himself. Observed his decision making, motivations, level of ambivalence and resistance to working with us. Offered a framework to make sense of the incident. Informed and reassured about our role. Gatekeeper for our safe entry to the work	He felt safe - expressed feelings - the death and his future Data on political context of his position and re-structuring. Pleased to have us there Noticed - his tiredness, cynicism, demoralisation and breakdown in relationships with his boss and organisation. Feared media. Fear for job & re-organisation. Watch - my over-identification re problems with bosses. Discussed this with colleague.
Meeting - Deputy Manager	Dialogue to assess the impact on him, connections between the boy's death and his own experiences. Gained his assessment re impact on staff and residents. Reassured him that our purpose was not to do 'counselling'	Very resistant - 'not the sort for counselling'. Room full of boxes, defensive but allowed us in. Off-loaded impact of the death on him, his suspicions. Talked non-stop - sister's sudden death, mother's death (recent anniversary). A secondary gatekeeper -could influence staff either way.
10.15 - 10.45	Meeting with 'high risk' member of staff Stress defusing re fear and flashbacks. Quick trace back from 'first thoughts?' to root out the purpose of flashbacks. Root issue = fear of what other ex-residents might do to him. Exploring, teaching, reframing to help restore functioning. Focused enquiry - 'What info, support and action is needed now to function personally and at work?' Identified priority issues. Creative methods Basic preventative education, mapped his coping skills	Only had 30 minutes Looked drawn, exhausted. Had the 'trauma stare'. Found dead boy. Few months ago he and the boy saw car crash in Grand Prix – more horrific but less impact. Couldn't believe impact of the boy's death– images of face and smell of body at night. Pleased with the rapid exposure of the core issue. His faced relaxed. Worried re inquest – priority – fear of parents' anger and blaming. Wishes of parents fro funeral? Angry - incorrect and unfair media reports. Strong religious beliefs helping.
10.45- 11.00	Meeting with SSD Psychologist Professional to professional discussion - how she might carry on staff support after our visit. Gave space for personal frustrations. Actively encouraged her as an 'agent of recovery' – information, support, ideas	Mismatch between verbal and non-verbals. Hiding behind professional talk? Lots of off-loading - frustrations of moving to this area - e.g. the denial of abuse etc on the island, only gets 3 sessions per week in the Home

Logging everything in sequence as it happened, with additional reflections at the time and later, improved my understanding of the inter-acting dynamics of the young residents, the staff team and the Children's Home internal and external managers. Many of the details recorded had little significance at the time they were taken. Tacitly felt elements such as the emotional atmosphere are easily forgotten if not captured in brief notes or symbols. As the work proceeded and new information and insights were sensed and obtained, patterns and connections developed and earlier seemingly inconsequential information gained meaning.

It will be noted that the extract covers just two hours at the start of 2 days work in the Children's Home and contains only the bare-bones of what was recorded. Thus the time-lines expose the complex nature of our work and just how many facts have to be retained and processed when working systemically, attending sometimes to individual needs, sometimes to the needs of groups and sometimes to the needs of the wider community and system.

#### **B.ii. Audio and video accounts**

I have tried using audio and video tapes to record experiences but only find them helpful in training situations. The vulnerable situations I work in demand trust, confidentiality and an environment undisturbed by the presence of equipment, and the logistics of using it. Attending acutely to each moment can also be reduced if I think I can rely on the tape as a record. The atmosphere that I sense in person as part of my intuitive decision making can never be captured well on tape and the level of my technical skills and equipment mean that poor recording gives a poor record of events. I tried to video record sessions with teachers during my three-year programme in Derry schools, but without someone to operate the equipment, the results were poor. Audio recordings were also poor as people spoke too quickly or quietly to be heard and the strong Northern Irish accents were hard to decipher on tape. As the story in Box 4 on the following page shows, even professionals cannot adequately record what happens. My preference is to work on improving my attention and capacity for reflection in the moment of action along with my recordings in notebooks that I can easily store, carry and access.

**Story Box 4****Testing Method B.ii: Video Recording**

*Video recordings of my work after the Docklands bomb were made when Independent Television News. I saw an opportunity to educate people that post-trauma work was not just about individual counselling. After discussions with the Head teacher and staff, we agreed they could film a class group that we had already worked with and were well trained in group discussion skills. The group were superb and the reporters gained a better understanding of what our work entailed, but I learnt that even with high quality camera operators and equipment, it was only possible to gain a viewable end product that was highly edited and showed only a fraction of the whole experience. The film rushes act as reminders of the session and give brief glimpses into what took place, but they are too disjointed to be of real use.*

– Taken from my records, 1996

**B.iii. Visualisations, symbols, metaphor and creative modes of expression**

I use these to encapsulate the multi-dimensional aspects of what has happened, including aspects that are not yet recognised and known and where a great deal of chaotic information is being received in a very short time through the senses. These sensory images are stored in the most primitive part of the brain, the hippocampus, which is pre-verbal so pre-verbal methods are most suitable. I can use any symbol or metaphor, even something as simple as a colour or shape to record the data I need for my first person enquiry. I can take it further using other devices, such as metaphor, mapping and story which provide the starting point for further work. Ayalon (1996) suggests that the metaphor acts as a buffer or mediator between an individual and the chaos or pain of the experience, like a bridge between my inner and outer world, thus making it possible to access a great deal of information quickly in a manner that can be used to gain insights and clarity. For example, I often imagine the situation as an island or foreign land and ask myself questions about what the territory is like, where I am in relation to others, how the rules are being made, who has power and so on. This can be done in the imagination while working but the method gains even more power if it is expressed in some visible form. Drawing the images on paper and mapping processes as a journey (as I did in the Trauma Process Model, Part C) have been the most useful methods for me, but I have also sculpted in clay or made living sculptures of my body posture. Creative forms of verbal expression such as poetry and story, with a heavy emphasis on imagery and metaphor, tend to flow from the non-verbal forms and represent a transitional phase towards the next stage of making sense. For example, I

encapsulated the complex experiences I had in my organisation after the Hungerford shootings by writing them as a fairy story. Key symbolic characters carried the meaning in my story more concisely than anything that I could have recorded formally (Capewell, 1989)

#### **B.iv. Methods for making sense in a wider framing**

Once I have gathered experiential data, I begin to articulate it non-verbally, then verbally as a narrative before looking at how I can place my insights into a wider framework of understanding. The starting point of this process, which will eventually need engagement with others, begins with making connections with other aspects of my past and current life, my inner world, my outer concerns and all the values and beliefs that underlay my perspective on the world. Many methods I use have been instilled over many years from training in **therapeutic disciplines**. For example, the '**Spot Imaging**' of transpersonal psychology (Somers, 2000) and the technique of '**Early Recollections**' (Beattie, 1994, Mosak & Maniaci, 1996:36) from Adlerian Psychology allow past experiences to be brought to the surface to examine their links to the present (as used in section A1). Connections can be made with other life events, patterns of behaviour can be discerned and insights gained about the influence of past distress on present thinking, actions and behaviour. Early recollections in particular help clarify underlying beliefs and values as well as the roots of prejudice and bias. Once an adult eye and understanding can be brought to bear on the mistaken beliefs and patterns of childhood, change in beliefs and therefore thinking, emotions and behaviour become more possible. I have used the Early Recollection method extensively in my work to understand my patterns of belief and thinking, to change emotional reactivity and behaviour and as an important tool of enquiry that I teach to help clients research their own patterns of living.

I have further increased my kit-bag of skills with the use of procedures requiring **rational thinking**, including the '**Ladder of Inference**' (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985) to detect the biases and assumptions in thinking made from observable data that might lead to global conclusions, The '**Learning Pathways Grid**' (Rudolf et al, 2001) to track differences between intentions and actions, and '**Multi-column note-taking**', a discipline that encourages the tracking of several channels of experience as they are being experienced or soon after. As I record data, I notice how I begin to make connections with other events and situations, my own and accounts of others, and thus begin to find a place for my experience. These connections can be made at many levels and in many forms – theoretical, biographical, systemic, presentational,



symbolic, spiritual, scientific, in the form of myths and legends. This is where the first-person enquiry gives way to second-person as other voices come into conversation with me, though not in person. This process moves forward when I turn the insights into presentational forms and diagrams, as found in Parts C and D. Thereafter, cognitive channels and written accounts provide the discipline I need to consider different frameworks from my own and the connections between them.

### **B.v. Writing**

The process of writing articles for popular and professional readership, and especially the multi-cycle process of writing this thesis, has been an important strategy of first person enquiry, especially as my practice originated and developed from personal and practical experience rather than academic research. Reflecting on and sifting through material, making choices about form and content helped me gain new ideas and insights in the process of trying to make sense, verify and communicate ideas. Writing and re-writing my experiences has brought a great deal of my practice, and the values and attitudes which ground it, into my awareness and created many re-understandings of earlier work and writing. Though others may be involved in the process, the final result is my responsibility and it is essentially my voice that speaks through it. My thesis also became a repository, even a silent motivator and supervisor, of work undertaken while I wrote. The Community Epidemiology study is a case in point as well as my further research into the 'debriefing controversy' (Capewell, 2004a) since my research and writing gave me the purpose and discipline that motivated and guided my involvement.

### **Group C: First-person methods for transforming experiences and planning future action**

These methods are a vital step in transforming my experiences into useful action during or after a piece of work. Those presented here can all be developed in many ways, such is the strength of the basic format:

#### **C.i. Multi-dimensional coping model (BE FIT & Phys.)**

This model is described more fully in Part D, reminds me to value all channels of being and coping and that I am ultimately the author of my own experience. The structure of the model gives me a systematic method for thinking and then taking action in each of the channels to ensure none are neglected. It is most useful when I feel frozen or

helpless and have forgotten that I have choice and alternatives. I often use the model in conjunction with the next.

### **C.ii. Six-piece story-making**

The Six-piece story making method (Lahad, 1992) provides a format for projecting difficult situations on to a symbolic, metaphorical story, drawing on the basic pattern of ancient legends and fairy-tales: the hero/heroine is given a mission to accomplish but to achieve it, help has to be sought from various sources to deal with the obstacles in their path before the final stage of their quest is reached. It provides me with a creative method for standing above seemingly intractable situations and finding new sources of energy, support and methods of coping to work out my next steps.

### **C.iii. Mapping**

Various forms of mapping the path taken through a difficult work period and its repercussions is a method I have used for myself many times to aid understanding, but also to decide how I continue in the future. My Trauma Process Map (Part C) is the most developed example of my use of this method. A similar method to mapping has become a vital '**escape strategy**' for moving myself out of incapacitating reactions using imagination. I imagine or draw a ladder from where I am in my stuck place at the time to where I want to be by a certain time. For each rung, I think of small actions and thoughts that will help move me up the ladder towards my goal. Thus finding a form for and mapping my route stimulates rational thinking and the creation of a practical action plan. When the 'rational thinking' function of the brain is frozen, this method uses the right brain which deals with creativity and lateral thinking to kick-start it.

### **C.iv. Self-supervision and self-therapy**

In this case, methods are borrowed from one-to-one situations and used on myself, sometimes with an imaginative device such as a wise consultant on the shoulder or the 'empty –chair ' technique from Gestalt therapy. It usually involves checking out my actions against theoretical models or, when work is exhausting, against metaphor. For example, the image of a tent pegged in as many places as possible represents an image that I can use to check that I have found a wide enough variety of allies to anchor a contract in enough places across a community or organisation to ensure that it will be well grounded.

## SECOND-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

First-person enquiry is lonely and can easily perpetuate existing biases and degenerate into the fulfilment of one's own prophecies. Hawkins noted that too much working alone, reflecting on reflections, as phenomenologists did, felt like a route to insanity. His research was brought alive by the feedback loops and creative insights from the encounter with communities and teams (Hawkins, 1988). My capacity to be critical, disciplined and reflective about subjectivity had to be checked and the pool of experience generating my knowledge needed to be renewed and complemented by the perspectives of others. Even the solitary meditative walk described before was enhanced by the presence of a person walking alongside in silent communion.

Second-person enquiry was therefore essential to the health and rigour of **first-person enquiry**, especially as **inter-personal relationships** are vital to participative approaches of all kinds. Understanding about dynamics and processes complex disaster situations was deepened by the pooling of diverse perspectives and creativity was enriched by the pooling of ideas. As more people became engaged in our responses, the interpersonal dynamics also become the raw material for real learning about post-disaster community dynamics on a larger scale.

My second-person enquiry was informed by the questions of the kind set by Reason (Training course notes):

- What different experiences can we bring to our inquiry?
- What can we learn about working together from how we work together?
- What ideas can we create together (that we could not create alone)?
- How can we use our resources to try them out in similar or different situations?
- What can we learn from how the group is working?
- How do we experience the power dynamics working between us?
- How are our cultural and other identities influencing how we are interacting?

The nature of my work and financial resources have been too random for me to envisage setting up formal enquiry groups that meet regularly, such as **Co-operative or Collaborative Inquiry** groups developed by Heron and Reason (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988) and **Appreciative Inquiry** groups developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (Ludema et al, 2001). My early attempts to set up a collaborative National Disaster Staff Network foundered after a few years because of lack of funding and

commitment of people better at giving help to others than themselves. During its existent, the Network did generated knowledge about the impact of disaster, and especially poor management, on staff in the helping professions.

It seems pertinent to acknowledge that the most creative and professionally successful part of my whole career in terms of international recognition and even, in some years, financially has been at a time when I was in sole charge of myself and my path, working only in loose collaborations with others. When I began disaster work, I needed to learn how to find my own voice and work from my own authority without being part of a group or organisation. This was partly the result of the shame and loss of trust I experienced after my Hungerford disaster experiences and later, after the death of my daughter, I did not have the physical or emotional capacity to give a regular commitment to others. This does not mean I could have started or survived alone, rather that I had to find creative ways of collaboration to suit the needs of the main purposes of my work and the specific projects I was involved in. Indeed, the foundation of my disaster work skills and my capacity for action research were laid down in a collaborative enquiry experience, the two year experiential Humanistic Psychology course I attended in Bath, 1986-7, described earlier.

I shall now present the forms of second-person enquiry that have contributed to my action research. They fall into the following broad categories of purpose:

**Group A:** Methods for personal and professional development

**Group B:** Methods for improving specific practice situations

**Group C:** Methods for collaborative assessment in specific situations

I shall now explain these groups of methods in detail.

#### **Group A: Second-person methods for personal and professional development.**

These methods are intertwined in all aspects of my life, professional and personal. At their heart is the quality of dialogues and conversations that I conduct, making my practice a relational one. I use the distinctions drawn by Baker et al (2002) between dialogue, an essential intellectual, verbal exchange of differing ideas to refine knowledge and abstract ideas, and conversations, a more emotional exchange in which human understanding is created beyond words and even in silent communion. My path and practice is a mosaic of many conversations with the occasional intellectual dialogue.

### **A.i. Inter-personal conversations**

Since the start of my career in disaster work, I have been so consumed by my need to answer the questions raised for me at Hungerford, that I overcame my usual inhibitions and set up a conversations and, occasionally, more structured dialogues with anyone I came across or read about who appeared to have mutual concerns or similar experiences. Many of the resulting relationships had a depth of shared knowing that meant it was a community that immediately knew its own kind and had few inhibitions about sharing information. From the feedback I received, I discovered that my approaches immediately communicated my authenticity, genuine interest in the issues and that learning would be put to good use. Because my experiences are so embodied in me, I could approach as a human being first, thus avoiding the barriers of approaching from a purely professional, academic or voyeuristic stance.

These dialogues have generated real-life information from many different people and groups, including survivors of disasters, campaigners and people from a wide range of professions, from disaster and trauma specialists, professionals caught up in disaster and the media. Two particularly fruitful dialogues were set up with Dr Ofra Ayalon of Israel and Dr Kendall Johnson of California, whose books first validated my approaches at Hungerford. At the time they were two of very few people specialising in community and school-based trauma response and their knowledge, support and encouragement has been central to my practice.

These first international links motivated my applications for travel scholarships that widened my dialogues with people with first hand knowledge of other disasters, as well as academics and clinicians. I also met more people who shared my belief in holistic approaches to disaster work than in the UK where there is more rigid polarisation of professionals and approaches. Most importantly, I felt less isolated and was motivated to develop my ideas in my own style.

Action research gave me tools for improving these dialogues, for example Torbert's '**Four Territories of Experience**' framework of Framing, Advocacy, Illustrating, Inquiry (1991) I used this structure as a framework for my presentation when I lobbied the UK Department for Education and Skills to raise awareness about the need for a more comprehensive approach to school crisis management in 2001. Where conversations took place in counselling situations, they were guided by my training in Heron's 'Six-Category Interventions' (1975) which gave me 'permission' for the more directive conversations needed in the early aftermath of disaster.

### **A.ii. Networks of enquiry**

My ability to network was founded on my capacity for lateral thinking, making connections and spatial awareness. It developed further as my survival strategy as a mother of three in a rural area trying to re-establish a career. My account of the Peasedown project (Story Box 1) illustrates where my personal networking merged into my professional work which developed through my work in Hungerford and later after disasters in London Docklands and Omagh, (see Part E). The networks sometime developed as the result of intended actions, sometimes spontaneously because I recognise and act on opportunities to do so. My professional disaster work networks expanded as a result of the article written about my Hungerford work (Scott, 1988) which was seen by professionals working with the Lockerbie disaster. They contacted me because my story resonated so much with theirs and they too felt marginalised. The subsequent invitation to Lockerbie and the networking that followed helped me create a small community of inquiry for mutual support and learning. It also led to many more networks, the next involving the Hillsborough disaster workers, and many more opportunities for action and learning that continue to this day.

My idea for a Disaster Staff Network grew from my informal networking. Going through the process of contacting other disaster workers across the UK contributed to my growing body of knowledge and also created a link with Gerry Smailes, an inspirational man involved in network development at the National Institute of Social Work. New Network members sent their stories with their applications to join, and these affirmed that my experiences were not unusual. A newsletter was published so our learning could be shared. We tried to hold meetings across the country, but many of the people involved were struggling emotionally with their disaster experiences or physically with the on-going demands of the disaster work or other stressful jobs. I also needed time and energy to create a new business and had little capacity for dealing with fund-raising or establishing a new charity. However, many of the links made at that time have persisted and there have been many spin-offs for myself and others. A Trauma Association developed in New Zealand, inspired by a short piece about our Network in a national journal (Beth Webster, personal communication).

The relationships I built up through travelling abroad, have meant that I have been able to create ad hoc networks of enquiry when I have needed them. Some have developed for specific purposes, such as the '**International Brainstorm**' I conducted via fax and post in 1995 using a questionnaire to gain a consensus view from expert practitioners

around the world about the competencies needed for post-trauma group debriefing (Capewell, 1997, 1999). Since my disaster response career began, and even since I joined CARPP, the advances in technology have revolutionised my capacity to create global networks. When I was invited to present my case about school crisis management to the Department of Education, I e-mailed everyone who worked in this field from many parts of the world to send a story or statement that would back my argument. This gave a richness to our advocacy with very little cost in time, energy and money.

As I complete my thesis, I am establishing a network with professionals who share my interest in community-based participative disaster response and action research in Melbourne, Canada and Los Angeles. The recommendations of people involved in International Development networks (Church et al, 2003) about developing, sustaining, evaluating and improving networks for creative participatory enquiry could add rigour to my future networking efforts.

### **A.iii. Research groups**

I have belonged to two research groups about disaster impact and response that contained many elements of action research and had similar values of democracy, participation and social change. They valued diverse ways of knowing and presentation and were as emergent as the constraints of funding bodies have allowed. They differed mainly in the absence of significant first person enquiry and reflection on process. However, they have provided mutual learning forum which have felt inclusive and accepting of holistic perspectives. Their products have the mark of authentic, real-life experience of people and professionals 'who have been there' and got their hands dirty. They were more fruitful than other traditionally run groups that I had abandoned

The first project was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and led by Dr Tim Newburn as a development from a qualitative study of the impact of the Hillsborough disaster on Social Workers (Newburn, 1993a, b, c). It consisted of a series of conferences using story-telling whereby our stories of disaster work were told to other participants, first in small groups, then as a whole. Finally, we told of how our learning had since been integrated into our lives and practice. Recommendations for policy makers were drawn up. The story-tellers continued to meet and write a book together, 'Journeys of Discovery' (Mead 1996), and this became another method of research in itself. This is where my embryonic Trauma Model was first used and published.

The second research group ran for two years until the end of 2003. The record of the project can be found on [www.edgehill.ac.uk/faculties/cscsj](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/faculties/cscsj). The research was the first ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded group to have disaster victims/survivors as equal co-researchers and they represent a diverse range of views and background, from academics to the unemployed. The 'professionals' too have a wide range of experience, from social justice, political action, social work, emergency planning, law, psychology and education. Our disaster experience also covers a wide range from murders in custody, civil unrest to high profile murders and major disasters of all kinds. There have been many personal spin-offs for me in the quality of the relationships I have made and the affirmation of my holistic stance to disaster response. My past learning has been consolidated and deepened from hearing other perspectives on disasters I have been involved with. I have gained new learning from experts, especially high profile lawyers and campaigners, and new learning and challenges from people involved first-hand in disaster.

#### **A.iv. Professional seminars and conferences**

These of course have their place and were very important to my early learning and networking. They helped me understand how my ideas fitted into the wider field. However, unless they are small and designed to encourage enquiry, I soon found that their competitive nature and emphasis on many short papers about quantitative studies was not at all conducive to helpful learning, even of the cognitive kind. The high costs and infinite number of these conferences now tend to be beyond my means and I choose carefully which I attend.

#### **A.v. Silent engagement with others**

This involves me as the unknown audience for someone else's communication. The power of an author or speaker to stimulate me to enquire depends very much on its timeliness and the passion with which I am posing my questions. Hillman's chapter on Betrayal (1975) came my way in such a timely fashion that I was willing to struggle with the difficult concepts of Jungian Analytical psychology and develop my Trauma Process model (see Part C). Whatever I read or heard, I noticed a stream of enquiry with the external voice, *"Where are you coming from? What makes you tick? Can I trust what you say? What is your bias? Do you speak with your own voice or as a mouthpiece for others for undisclosed reasons or gain? Do I feel included as a valued recipient of your message?"* If I am aroused by opinions and actions I do not like, I find this silent dialogue enables me to stand back from intolerance while I try to understand their position, the different routes that people take and the variety of choices possible. If



I am aroused with agreement or disagreement, it may spur me to contact the person, made easier by e-mails. Reading about the lives of others gives me ideas, inspiration and courage. Above all it lets me know I am not the only one with fears and frailties. In learning about others, I learn more about myself.

### **Group B: Second-person methods for improving specific practice situations**

By this I mean, the way I engage others in my search to improve my practice as I work during specific situations and contracts. I describe these methods below

#### **B.i. Consultancy, therapy and supervision**

These forms of second-person enquiry have all been influential throughout my career, providing a safe relationship for loving challenge, for experimenting with new behaviours, for support and clarity in my learning about organisational issues, myself as a professional and as a person, and general human behaviour. Some relationships have also helped me understand the application of theoretical perspectives to practice, especially Adlerian and Transpersonal methods. I have also transformed potentially damaging experiences with therapists, for example the one who got angry and walked out on me two months after Ann's death and the other a few weeks later who could not cope with my tears, into learning about the different styles needed after trauma and bereavement. Finding the money to use independent sources of therapy and consultancy even when my income has been low has been a priority. I have supplemented one-to-one work with group experiences, such as long-term therapy or training groups to widen feedback and experiments with new behaviours. With increasing maturity, I have also found colleagues with whom I can practice what we call 'equavison', or co-supervision. All of these methods provided a means of continual professional development and many of the foundational skills of my action researcher.

#### **B.ii. Peer supervision - for mutual learning about practice**

These are created with my immediate work colleagues during a piece of work and between different pieces of work. Because of the expertise of the people I work with and familiarity with supervision techniques, the sessions are informal but operate with an intent to learn and understand each other's actions. We agree on what we need to explore and then draw on our varied resources for creative methods, such as mapping or drawing, when we need deeper insights. During intense periods of work, we extend first person methods and use, for example, metaphor and the BE FIT & Phys model

(see Part D) to gain a sense from our tacit knowledge of what is really happening and to access our thoughts and feelings in order to change things if necessary.

### **B.iii. Peer knowledge generation during an emergency response**

When working in difficult conditions, often with basic facilities and rapidly changing information, methods had to be developed to ensure knowledge could be generated, choices identified and decisions made from a shared basis of information. Attention had to be paid to the mechanics of how this was done when people were tired, messages mislaid, emotions easily aroused and people became upset if they felt excluded from receiving up-dates. The recording system that developed involved large sheets of paper stuck to the walls of our 'office' where everything except identifiable personal information was recorded. Depending on who had access to the room, different sections could be added for recording emotions, frustrations, ideas and affirmations. Our team and 'internal' assistants could keep abreast of new information and developments without much effort as they passed by and nothing could get lost or hidden. At the end of each day, the papers were used for reflection and planning, and for review and future learning afterwards.

### **Group C: Second-person methods for collaborative assessment in specific situations**

This group of methods had a dual purpose, illustrating how my methods also become the content of my practice:

- First, as a means of gathering data about an issue or disaster
- Second, as a means of helping participants take charge of their own learning and recovery by researching themselves, their own situation, needs and resources. As well as researching their past and current situation, they are also researching the future possibilities and even creating futures as yet undreamed of.

### **C.i. Disaster assessment frameworks**

The methods can be used in training disaster response teams, where I encourage people to learn self and group enquiry methods to create plans and procedures appropriate to their context. I also use them immediately after an incident, for example my S-S CIRA framework (See Part D3) to foster enquiry and mobilise a wide range of group and inter-personal support in the community. It will be seen from my later accounts that all the models I use in my work are designed to build enquiry dialogues

and conversations, both with peers, professional supporters and agencies. These include my trauma process model that invites exploration of past, present and future dimensions; various forms of post-trauma debriefing, processing and review. For example, Ayalon's '**Empowerment Model**' (Gal et al, 1996) invites people to map their past and current coping strategies in order to influence their future choices and expansion of coping skills. The multi-dimensional coping model, '**BE FIT & Phys**' described in Part D3, helps a group understand the variety of reactions possible after trauma, identifies gaps and encourages them to create new ideas to open up new channels of coping. These methods can be used cognitively, practically and experientially.

### **C.ii. Creative and therapeutic methods**

These methods offer opportunities for collaborative learning and moments of surprise. Many of the exercises I use have their origins in dramatherapy and several of my most valued colleagues have been trained in this tradition. Other methods, such as Instant Drama (a wonderful method for involving many diverse voices and creating new solutions), were developed during my time as a youth and community worker.

### **C.iii. Methods from organisational development and assessment of culture**

These methods enable the collaborative raising of awareness of the dynamics and culture of teams, communities and organisations for several purposes:

- to work together in pre-emergency planning to understand the culture, identify aspects that might impede resilience to the disruptions and stress of trauma and to produce effective crisis management solutions that are congruent with the organisation's culture.
- in post-trauma work, to identify collaboratively the significance and meaning of traumatic disruptions to the system in order to assess vulnerability and needs.
- to ensure post-trauma responses are culturally relevant and to envision future readjustments to the system.

The methods I use specifically use for this purpose were learned when working alongside Dr Peter Hawkins and Dr Adrian McLean (see Hawkins and Shohet 1989, 2000; McLean and Marshall, 1988). Some rely on the quality of questions posed to a group or to key people within a system that encourage reflection, often at a profound level. Questions of the kind, 'The unwritten rules of this group are...' or 'the hidden agenda that this group carries are...' can begin to penetrate the hidden assumptions

and unnoticed everyday practices and rituals. Cultural knowing is gained at practical and experiential levels when such questions are used within creative exercises such as sculpting the group, or as 'enacted role sets' that explore the roles and boundaries between different parts of the system (described in Hawkins and Shohet, 2000:149-150).

I found such methods particularly useful when developing multi-disciplinary crisis response teams. Each discipline has to be clear about its role so that other teams can relate to them and negotiate boundaries and co-operation. This can be done simply by asking each discipline or agency to complete the following statements

- What I offer this group (or team, or agency) is
- What I expect from this group is
- What I see happening in this group is...

Such questions help each component part to be very clear about their specific role, their boundaries and what they need to communicate to each other. I first used these when working with a multi-disciplinary disaster team in a Northlands hospital, New Zealand in 1992 and it was remarkable how unclear different groups were about their core task and unique purpose.

In the emotionally charged environment of post-trauma work, creative methods enable difficult issues and complex dynamics to be exposed quickly and safely, as shown in this brief extract from the staff development programme I ran for the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre team in Story Box 5 on the following page.

**STORY BOX 5****THE LIVERPOOL HILLSBOROUGH TEAM: GETTING TO KNOW ITSELF  
BETTER**

*First, I used a sculpting exercise to bring the conception and birth of the team into our awareness. Various issues and information quickly emerged and we three distinct groups within the team were exposed – initiators, second wave and newcomers. Each has different levels of exhaustion which were exaggerating the divisions. Having identified the history of the team, the three groups described themselves in terms of tribes from different countries, creating their own rules, rituals, songs, jokes and artefacts that symbolised their values, history and culture. A dialogue was set up between the three 'tribes' to communicate their distinctive features and ask questions of each other what they could contribute to the team and what they needed from others. This helped them value each other's perspectives and gave the newcomers the equal right with established groups to express a view. Difficult issues and complex concepts were brought into awareness and given concrete form. Perceptions could be checked and altered. More importantly, this was done in a spirit of fun and enjoyment at a time when few felt able to laugh.*

– Extract from records, 1989

**THIRD-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH**

While first and second person enquiry and practice were geared to knowledge creation 'for me and for us', third person action was 'for them', the wider audience, whether in society, a professional field or organisation, who were not known face-to-face. The aim was to encourage and empower these unknown people to become action researchers themselves, not just passive recipients of an out-there form of communication. Denzin (1997) also notes the concern of post-modern writers and ethnographers to communicate to wider audiences through writing, lectures and other public media forms in a way that, through their self-reflective, paradoxical and ironical quality, people become engaged in their own self-reflection. Reason & Torbert (2001) believe that genuine third person research and practice welcomes inquiry that results in re-forming the original research practice design, purpose and conduct.

Third person inquiry should ideally be grounded in the personal and interpersonal forms of enquiry described above and the boundaries are not always clear. It is concerned with questions of the kind (Reason, Training course notes):

- How could decision-making processes in this system be more transparent?
- How could more voices be heard?
- How can this system learn more effectively?

I would also add: 'What does the whole system, community or society need to learn and change in order to resolve the issues that have been identified in a part of the system?'

The logistics of my business mean that I cannot resource the various technologies and methods designed to facilitate the large-group enquiry, such as those described by Leith (1997) including **Search Conferences**, **Open space design** and **Real-Time Strategic Change**, and methods such as **Learning History** (Bradbury, 2001) and **Dialogue Conferencing** (Pålshaugen, 2001). However, I can learn from and integrate aspects of them in my opportunistic third-person strategies. The same can be said for the third-person strategies of practice that move on from single case studies to large-scale projects 'creating change through the generation of new arenas and discourses' that become political events (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996). Of particular influence have been the **Participative action research** projects described by people such as John Gaventa and Juliet Merrifield (1993) and, in Reason and Bradbury (2001): Fals-Borda (Ch.2), Swantz et al (Ch. 39) and Brinton Lykes et al (Ch.36). They all gave the ownership of knowledge back to the people who need it for change.

The closest I have come to using PAR was in the **Newbury Community Epidemiology Project** (Capewell, 1998c) which I initiated and co-organised with my husband and then other members of our own community. I drew heavily from PAR approaches described above and especially from the work of Merrifield and others (Park et al, 1993) dealing with similar issues in Tennessee. It was also inspired by the book, *Citizen Science* (Irwin, 1995), which advocates a place for the everyday knowing of communities affected by an issue. These books gave me the confidence to engage with and challenge the established scientific community as well as to seek participation by people with many different voices. Two major reports were published as the result of our study, one into the incidence of cancers in the area, (Berkshire HA, 1997) and one into the radiation environment of Greenham Common (Croudace et al, 1997). This

Project was the subject of my CARPP Diploma research and it involved working within many political, community and professional tensions. Story Box 6 gives a glimpse into my third person practice.

#### **STORY BOX 6**

##### **A COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY STUDY: The incidence of Leukaemias and environmental links in the Newbury area.**

*The study grew from a wider enquiry in 1996 by Andrew Gilligan, the Defence Editor of The Sunday Telegraph, following the exposure of secret documents relating to accidents involving radioactive material at Greenham Common in 1958. I mobilised the local community to generate statistical data of high quality on the spatial incidence of the illness and information that might shed light on the relationship with environmental factors, such as radiation. From the more localised second-person research, the study moved into an impersonal third-person arena through the making of a documentary for national television (ITV, World in Action, 9<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1996) and the involvement of national and international media of various kinds. This brought us back into second-person enquiry with other community groups around the world and also promoted second and third person engagement with the academic community and special interest political and campaigning groups. The nature of the subject and the presence of leaked secret documents meant that all our action and reflections had high political significance. This fact was highlighted by hearing about the invasion of the Sunday Telegraph offices by Ministry of Defence police, warnings to ourselves to keep separate copies of all computer files and documents, and the continuous harassment of a CND officer who fled abroad to hide in his ancestral estate. First-person research to care for myself and my own grief was essential throughout*

– taken from CARPP Diploma paper (Capewell, 1998c)

My style of third person research-in-practice tends to emerge in an organic way as a consequence of first- and second-person practice which usually exposes issues and questions that need to be addressed at a wider systems level, whether in an organisation or community. My motivation towards social action means that I always attempt to do what I can to move my enquiry to this level, as shown in my work from Hungerford to Omagh (Part E). The Omagh bomb work described in Part E gave me the best opportunity to work with a wider system, though I could never be sure how long the contract would last and plans could only be made for one stage at a time. Many questions about the fundamental issues raised by disaster and the purpose of disaster response also need engagement with wider audiences in society and amongst

professionals if they are to influence policy makers and resources at Government levels. This is particularly relevant now in relation to the Contingency Bill going through Parliament which increases central control (Turney, 2002).

In my future work, I should like to promote the use of whole systems approaches, especially in the development of emergency plans to encourage greater community involvement and participation. This might reduce the gap between theory and practice and make their implementation more likely in times of crisis. **'Whole systems approach'** projects such as that led by Pratt et al (2000) in the Newcastle and North Tyneside area whereby lay and professional people collaboratively developed services for the elderly would provide a model. One multi-agency project has been undertaken by Gregory and Midgley (1999) to create a psycho-social disaster response service involving nineteen different agencies in Hull. It helped re-form the original questions and issues being addressed and encouraged enquiry across agencies about values and practice assumptions. However, whereas Pratt's whole systems work was led by the needs of a diverse group of stakeholders and consumers of the services being developed, the Hull project was led by the needs of the agencies and the methodology of system's theory to the exclusion of the needs of potential clients. The fact that neither the consultants nor participants had any first-hand experience of major disaster contributed to the theoretical, unauthentic 'feel' I had about the results. Co-ordination of such diverse agencies in the heat of disaster seldom works (Hills, 1994).

Throughout my work in disaster, I have sought to fulfil the imperative of third-person practice to put one's work out to a wider audience for scrutiny, dissemination of ideas and for the encouragement of further enquiry. This action has also motivated my enquiry into how I best present my work to different audiences and this has in turn influenced the development of my conceptual thinking and construction of flexible theoretical models which can be used elsewhere. This has been done in the following ways:

- **Lobbying** through written representations and, if possible, meetings with policy makers and senior executives, for example Chief Executives, the Department for Education, Unions and Professional bodies, and politicians such as John McFall MP, then Minister for Northern Ireland.
- Pro-active and reactive contacts with all branches of the **media** (TV, radio and press) from local to International levels. I have been involved in media interviews and documentaries on three separate subjects: youth crime; disaster, trauma, and



bereavement; and Leukaemia and environmental issues. (E.g. several features about my work in the national press; letters to Editors, articles for publication, influencing the content of an item on ITN news after the Docklands bomb, appearing on GMTV Breakfast TV, BBC News, ITV's This Morning, Radio 4 'Today' and, in 2004, contact with the Producer concerning local protests against a BBC TV documentary about the Hungerford shootings. Most recently I have used my media contacts to gain information about the Berkshire rail crash and to establish outreach survivors and the wider disaster community.

- **Writing articles** for publication in professional Journals and newspapers such as the Times Educational and Higher Educational Supplements. (e.g. an article on the need of Universities and Colleges to be aware of the needs of new students just affected by the Omagh bomb, Times Higher Educational Supplement, 25th Sept. 1998.)
- Contributing **chapters to books** (Black et al, 1996; Lindsay and Elsegood, 1996; Mead, 1996, Newburn, 1993b).
- **Consultancy** to organisations producing reports and training packs (Yule & Gold, 1993; British Red Cross, 1992, BPS, 2002, INTO guidelines, (2000) and to a novelist writing about trauma (Mead, 2003)
- Giving **lectures**, running **workshops and seminars** at local to international levels.
- Contributing to **internet networks** such as the Crisis Response Network of the International School Psychological Association
- **Contacting** any one or agency that I hear or read about who may have a mutual interest in sharing experiences or information to further action at a higher level beyond that which can be done by a smaller group.

The challenge I give to myself is to find ways of doing all these things in a way that promotes enquiry. With this in mind, I once attempted to introduce the idea of using Open Space Technologies at an International Conference to encourage greater participation from people attending, see Story Box 7 on the following page.

**STORY BOX 7:****An attempt to encourage a third-person enquiry approach at an International Conference.**

*I was invited to join the organising committee of an International Conference in 1999. I floated the idea of Open Space technologies to the co-ordinator who immediately read Harrison Owen's book (1997). With the committee's agreement, planning began for an Open Space event, facilitated by a person skilled in Large Scale interventions and graphical representations of the proceedings. The only male committee member, who had never attended meetings, took action outside of the Committee with his friend, the Conference Chairman, to challenge and stop the idea. As a result, only a few Open Space sessions were included as a small part of a traditional conference structure. While I wanted a new idea to be seeded, I feared that if it were not done properly, people would completely turn against such ideas. The conference provoked strong reactions in both directions. Some found the different style liberating while others found it disturbing because 'they came to conferences to learn from experts', not each other, even though traditional presentations formed the bulk of proceedings.*

– Taken from record, 1999

This experience taught me the risks of introducing such a new concept before I was fluent with the methods and without other informed and experienced allies. Gender issues were also at play on several levels and there were many factors in the running of the conference, not least lack of funding, that were not conducive to a fundamentally different style. It brought home to me just how much rigour, discipline and organisation is needed to produce smooth running democratic technologies that give the appearance of total informality. Lack of funding can only be countered by a general commitment and enthusiasm from everyone involved to make such an event work.

## **PART C**

### **MAKING PERSONAL MEANING FROM MY EXPERIENCES**

**Sections:**

- 1. Making sense from my Hungerford experience**
- 2. The Trauma Process Map: A personal construction of experience**
- 3. The development of the model beyond myself**
- 4. Practical knowing: Learning from the model as I use it**

Part C returns to the time after the Hungerford shootings when I was struggling to make sense of my experience of the event and the aftermath. It shows how I used my naturally imbibed form of action research to make meaning out of my experiences and the presentational expression of my personal path through despair that resulted. This map became the foundation for further personal use, especially after the death of my daughter, and my future professional path of disaster work.

This model is the product of constant enquiry and in Part C I use stories that contribute to it from 1987 to the present in 2004. By the time I joined CARPP, I was beginning to use my model with much hesitation in a few training situations and after the Dunblane shootings. The Omagh bomb response described in Part E gave me the first comprehensive opportunity for testing it more widely. What I present here is my most up-to-date articulation of the model which includes the learning from Omagh and from subsequent disasters, training and traumatic incidents until the present. I intend to continue refining the model and extending its application to new situations. I also intend to continue my enquiry into how best to communicate its uses to other lay and professional people.

When talking about the original map of my experience, I use the term Trauma Process Map, but the later development of it as a working, practical framework is called the Trauma Process Model.

## **C 1**

### **MAKING SENSE FROM MY HUNGERFORD EXPERIENCE**

#### **THE PROCESS OF SENSE-MAKING**

This part of my thesis concerns one important means, the creation of the Trauma Process Map, by which I made sense of my initial Hungerford experience and the repercussions that followed. Before I examine this in detail I shall show where it fits into my whole sense-making process in the 17 years that have followed.

In the first two years after the massacre, I was still living the experience and feeling its negative consequences too deeply to make much sense at all, except in the terms of my bosses that made me think I was odd and that my reactions were only to do with my personal pathology. A few attempts at general counselling did little to lighten the darkness. Towards the end of the second year I began to add the insights of a second person, a personal consultant, and it was as a result of this that my Trauma Process Map, the subject of Part C, was conceived. Further second person insights came from renewing contact with others who worked at Hungerford and then meeting other disaster workers, especially in Liverpool (Hillsborough disaster workers) and Lockerbie. However, the stories of other major UK disasters, such as Lockerbie, Hillsborough and the Kings Cross Fire, dominated the lecture circuit and media at that time and it was not until I went abroad to Israel and the countries I visited during my Churchill Fellowship that I was asked to tell my Hungerford story in public. I was taken aback by the degree of genuine interest shown in what I had to say in sharp contrast, as you will discover in the following pages, to the silencing I had experienced at work and in the Hungerford area. I also found books written about the massacre that filled in many gaps in my knowledge and showed me other perspectives of the whole story (Kapardis, 1989, Josephs, 1993). Another layer of reflection followed when I was asked to contribute chapters about the massacre to several books (Newburn, 1993, Mead 1996, Black et al, 1996) and I began to review my collection of articles, newspaper cuttings and video-recordings of TV documentaries.

Reflecting on my Hungerford experiences and reflecting on my reflections became part of my life, peaking whenever I became involved in other disasters or when subsequent situations reactivated memories of what happened to me. It was not, however, until I joined the CAARPP programme that my reflections became more disciplined as I

discovered writing as a tool of research. The need to check facts and assumptions made me read my original documents with a more discerning eye as I looked for the beliefs and influences behind the original writing and what I was now producing. In order to make sense of the story for others, I had also to make more sense of it to myself. With each re-writing and editing, I began to become less emotionally involved in the story and less stuck in my version of it. With the hindsight of time and additional learning, I also noticed themes and connections between the past and the future. My reflections on reflections were multiple and continued until the showing of the latest TV documentary in December 2004, a week before the deadline for completing this thesis. Though I am sure more reflections will occur, emotionally I feel I can lay the original experiences to rest. I recount some of my new insights from the re-flections in the following paragraphs.

## **WHAT SENSE DID MY LATER ENQUIRY MAKE OF MY ORIGINAL STORIES?**

### **What themes and connections with future stories were present in the original?**

Reflecting on my writing, I was struck by how the first stories contained the seeds of future events. The main characters were there, either because they were present or absent, with absence being the cause of future problems. The dynamics between us and the seeds of my perceptions that framed my reactions were also present, along with the different layers of the story – the personal, the interpersonal, the organisational and community as well as the historical background. Some of the subjective elements motivated my search into my past to discover the influences that had shaped my perceptions and bias (see part B2. The issues of gender and, bearing in mind my position as a newcomer, inclusion and exclusion issues could be detected, along with the way power was being used by my co-officer to keep me in my place so that he could stay in control of our joint territory. Power and gender issues meant that I did not deal well with my co-officer's reactions and I used defiance to fuel my resolve to ignore him and visit the staff at Hungerford.

My own context is apparent –a mother being pulled in several directions, working in a new job without her old support networks, as well as my multi-tasking abilities that helped me manage several situations at once, keeping an ear on the News broadcasts as well as on the cooking pot and the five children in the house on the evening of the shootings. I was also handling my own disruption from the burglary (and handling the Victim Support volunteer), answering phone-calls from distressed staff and taking on board the horrific news of the disaster.

Though I wasn't aware of their significance at the time, wider social dynamics related to disaster were also present in this scenario, for example the disengagement of people for whom the incident and location meant nothing to them personally and the rejection of offers of help from the Youth leader. Need and help were seen as signs of weakness, a taboo in this community. Finally, the story showed I was also conscious of a bigger perspective in recognising this event and moment as part of history and a key moment in my own life and history. I sensed that the story would be important not just for me but for others.

### **What other options did I have?**

The next stage of my reflection was to ask myself, *"Could the story that evolved have been different? What choices were open to me at the time and in the way I responded?"* I remember clearly the moment of realisation that this was not just a drama out there, I had a responsibility to act and a choice to make. Backed by a logical assessment of my duty and boundaries, I chose to engage – first as a Manager and then as part of a multi- agency team. I also glimpsed the relief of being free to work in my natural style while my bosses and colleagues were away. Once I said 'Yes' to engagement, other choices followed which took me down a path of repercussions and consequences. Then I felt I had no choice about what happened to me...

It took many years to believe that other choices were available – I did not want to think I had chosen the path I took. When, later, I met more disaster workers at Hungerford and around the world, I learnt that my Hungerford story was remarkably similar to theirs (Fawcett, 1987; Eggleton, 1989; Kelsey, 1994). I read accounts of disaster work stress (e.g. Duckworth, 1986) and recognised the dynamic of Ken Doka's term, 'disenfranchised grief' (Doka, 1989). It was hard to believe that there could ever be another post-disaster story. The pattern went like this:

*'As workers in the helping services in statutory authorities, their normal routines were suddenly disrupted by horrific events. They and their organisations were unprepared and untrained. Often their bosses did not think they should be involved. They responded beyond the normal call of duty. Their colleagues were resentful of their high profile work and influx of resources, especially if they carried an extra load of normal work. They were exhausted. Going back to their old job was difficult and boring. Managers reacted badly to them. No one understood. They escaped via depression, illness or haphazard*

*behaviour and resigned, often with nothing else to go to, losing careers, pension rights and sometimes hope. Some survived, moving on to lives quite different from before.'*

Though the original stories of staff at Hungerford were similar, what we did with those stories was very different. I chose anger and then moved into more positive recycling of the experience. Others went through marriage breakdown, depression, alcohol, 'dropping out' into a different life style, armed robbery and at least two suicides (Kelsey, 1994). One man I know pursued a career through journalism that took him into more and more traumatic events, insisting that they never affected him. The Paddington train crash triggered his break down in 1999, and his reactions were triggered again as he watched the TV images of the next rail crash in Berkshire in November 2004.

It was only later that I learned there could be other options and choices for someone caught up in disaster. If there had been a better integrated Youth Service staff team, the 'container' for dealing with such a distressing event would have been stronger. If the world had been different for women and mothers when I grew up and started my career, I might have been more confident and assertive and more able to deal with the negative reactions of colleagues and Managers. If the culture of late-80's Britain and Berkshire's white-male dominated Youth Service had been different, the Managers may not have viewed emotional need as weak and female anger as too challenging. If I had processed my reactions, if Managers had processed theirs, the emotions could have been discharged, different perspectives understood and conflicts resolved.

If all those 'ifs' had happened, I might have chosen a different route from anger and depression. But if that had happened, would I have learnt so much about myself and survival, and would I have developed a practice which I believe has made a difference to others and has made a contribution to the field? Speculating like this can be wasteful if it creates regrets rather than learning, or if, from this hindsight, I criticise my reactions too harshly and deny their significance to me at that time. I have learnt two major lessons. First, that it is possible to make a difference and develop a useful practice out of experience, and from a starting point of feeling worthless. Second, that an event cannot be changed, only how it is experienced and what one does with it. There is **always another way forward, always an alternative** - small words but a major lesson for me and one which I can pass on to others who feel they have no choice.

But now I need to tell the continuation of my Hungerford story in which my attempts to make sense of my direct disaster work became entangled with its repercussions. I have cut the story drastically, but have kept the details that are relevant to the path I took later.

## **CONTINUING THE HUNGERFORD STORY: THE RIPPLES OF DISASTER**

The impact of the shootings and its complex repercussions shot through the whole disaster community – the geographical community of Hungerford and beyond, the social community of friends and relatives and the psychological community of all who identified with the tragedy. This included all kinds of staff employed in the many aspects of rescue, recovery and aftercare. It also included me. The story continues:

*“My crisis began once my managers returned from holiday. Their reactions to the shootings and our involvement were complex (see Capewell, 1993a, 1996b). I felt they had little idea of, and little interest in, the work that our team had done in Hungerford. I received praise from others working in Hungerford - from the head teachers, the Director of Social Services and especially the Vicar of Hungerford, who really understood the community elements of the disaster. From my managers, I received silence, lack of recognition, and criticism for not producing the usual standard of written reports or not following usual bureaucratic procedures. I was angry when they told me to leave young people to their families, as it did not match the needs and demands confronting us.*

*The consequences of a complex set of circumstances at a time of intense feeling, exhaustion, and vulnerability culminated in anger with a quality and intensity that I had never before experienced. Such anger, especially in a woman, was not a useful emotion to express uncontrollably in a very traditional, male dominated organisation. It produced reactions that created further anger in me, bitterness and a wish for revenge. This in turn exacerbated the exhaustion, cynicism and loss of motivation. The backlog of normal work on top of the disaster work did not help. I became the awkward, difficult woman of the organisation.*

*The accumulating stress reached crisis point with an article in the National Youth Work Journal (Scott, 1988) about our work at Hungerford. The interview*



*was the first time in a year that anyone at work had given us (the Youth Leader and I) quality attention to our story and we began to unleash pent up feelings about our management. I realised this was dangerous for me as an Officer in a 'watch your back' culture. I took immediate action to tell my superior, who, unbeknown to me, failed to inform his boss, the County Officer. Though Scott had tempered her article, its publication caused him to fly into a rage.*

*Nearly two years of great confusion followed along with behaviour I could not comprehend from my superiors that. Later, I heard the radio programme that raised the issue of bullying at work for the first time and recognised my manager's behaviour (the talk was based on research later published by Adams & Crawford, 1992). My hopes for promotion seemed at an end when I was told my application for a senior post would no longer be supported. I experienced prolonged periods of deep despair in which I suffered loss of hope, confidence, motivation and energy. I felt I wasn't the person I thought I was and my sense of identity seemed in tatters. My innate trust in people I thought were caring was destroyed. I internalised everything they said about me. I believed my senior manager's threats that he would ensure I had no further career anywhere, thus the loss of financial security loomed. I became angry and bitter and dearly wanted revenge. I was cynical about the organisation and everyone in it and soon became paranoid, seeing every action and communication as a personal attack on me and counter-attacking with cynical remarks. I had lost hope and wouldn't allow optimism in anyone else.*

*I was marginalised at work so much that I felt totally disconnected and disempowered. I felt odd and believed my reactions must be different from those of others involved in the disaster. The isolation and sense of shame was so complete that I did not feel I had the right to make contact with anyone else I had worked with in Hungerford. Stress-related sick leave was not part of the culture and I feared that any 'mental' condition on my records would end my career for ever."*

From this point of despair and worthlessness, I began to find a different way and I now turn to the story of how I transformed my experience into my own theory of recovery, the foundation for my future professional practice.

### **How I reacted to this experience**

The repercussions of the Hungerford shootings left me in a state of great confusion and personal crisis. Though I was heavily embedded in the experience with very negative perceptions, there were brief periods when I could galvanise my resources to reflect on myself and make wider connections. I used the questions I had learnt in organisational development work with Peter Hawkins a few years before, asking: *“What did I represent in this organisation and what were the underlying values and behaviours that were being played out in it?”* I also asked, *“What happens to those who do not fit the accepted mould?”*, *“What happens to those who are willing to think for themselves and dare to express it?”* - noting that the use of the word ‘dare’ implied a great deal about the atmosphere of fear I had discovered amongst Berkshire Youth Service Officers. These questions represented my first interpretation of my experience and the first indications of how I was framing it in terms of the experience of a ‘scape-goat’. Gender issues were also dominant. My observations were as follows:

*“I was still a recent arrival in the organisation and my career path was different from other Officers. I was a married woman with children, not trying to deny my gender by assuming a macho stance or by playing any of the other roles that made women more acceptable in the organisation. I had witnessed the downfall of another female Officer who had dared to challenge the status quo. I had a sudden insight that the next scape-goat might be me. I had been appointed to ‘rock the boat’ by the County Officer, who had not realised that if I succeeded, he, being in very strong control of the boat, would also be rocked. My role and fury in the aftermath of the shootings was the giant wave that had threatened to turn the boat over.”*

My first interpretations gave me enough insight to release myself from self-blame and believe that I was worthy enough to seek allies. Desperation also fuelled my resolve and my second-person enquiries began. The results brought about action and more allies in a wider disaster community:

*“In this frightening and chaotic period I had to deal with a self I hardly knew. I was in a very strange land, full of scenarios I had always sought to avoid. I set out to find allies who could help me regain my power. One taught me about different kinds of power, reminding me that personal power and experiential power could effectively counter power gained from status and delegated*

*authority. She taught me to use established organisational systems to by-pass individual managers. I had a perfect opportunity to test it out. The article written about my Hungerford work (Scott, 1988) resulted in an invitation to Lockerbie after their disaster. My boss banned me from accepting this invitation. Taking my mentor's advice, I made the system work for me and took action to have my invitation sent from their Chief Education Officer to ours, thus by-passing my line managers. This worked and I went to Lockerbie. A few weeks later I was invited to assist Merseyside Education Authorities after the Hillsborough disaster as part of a team of consultants. I was again barred by my boss from going. The same process using Chief Officers was put in place and I gained a secondment to Merseyside for several weeks."*

- taken from my records, 1989

Meeting other disaster workers was a breakthrough experience. I quickly found that my experiences were not uncommon and as much part of the aftermath of disaster work as any personal pathology or weakness I had been accused of. I also became aware of the term 'vicarious trauma' experienced by those working alongside the primary disaster community. The vicarious trauma was a mirroring or 'parallel process' (Talbot, 1990) for what was being experienced within the disaster community itself. Now I had peer disaster work colleagues and we were all learning together from our very similar experiences at work. This support became even more important for me when I returned from Merseyside to my job. I had something else to experience and learn:

*"On my first day back at work, I was met with incredible anger from several members of my own staff team. A woman only very loosely connected to one of the youth centres had died during my absence. I was blamed by the youth leader and other staff for being away in Liverpool dealing with other people's grief when, they said, I should have been supporting them in theirs. I could just about cope with anger from my bosses, but this was too much."*

– my records, 1989

I was continuing to learn about the unexpected and strange nature of the ripples and repercussions of disaster work. The response of my staff felt very immature. I could cope with attacks from my managers, but not my staff. I was now sure I did not want to stay in this organisation.

## THE CONCEPTION OF THE TRAUMA PROCESS MODEL

I could not make sense of my predicament alone, so I paid for personal consultancy with a long valued mentor, Dr Peter Hawkins. Having heard my story, he suggested I read the work on betrayal in *'Loose Ends'* by the Jungian Analyst, James Hillman (1975) and a book called *'Living your Dying'* (Keleman, 1974). As I read, I recognised my own painful experiences and had an inkling of a wider meaning. My creativity was mobilised and I began to integrate my new insights into the embryonic mental maps I was already plotting. I struggled mentally like a dog with a bone to find a cognitive framework for my chaos and confusion, sensing in my gut when my thoughts matched my experience. The overpowering emotions that I could not contain by will or existing thought patterns began to be controlled by this new framing of my world. Now I could see choice was possible in how I reacted, even in the depth of despair when it seemed as if fate was in control and the world was determined to crush me. Betrayal, scape-goating, revenge, and what forgiveness really demands appeared to be issues at the heart of my exploration

I used my Geographer's skill of synthesis, bringing together many different elements in, above and below the landscape of my crisis world, touching on many different disciplines in my search to understand its interconnected whole. How can this territory be organised, resourced, used and sustained? How can this living system be depicted, lived with and transformed? The answers resulted in a dynamic map through which I could channel my own insights and integrate them with learning from theories and the experiences of others. It was a personal map and therefore, I believed, not particularly transferable or useful to other people so I used it only for myself to guide me out of my crisis into the future. I did not think of exposing it to public view as I had neither an audience nor the belief that I, as an individual without any particular status in the professional world of trauma, had anything worthwhile to present. My experience felt far too insignificant compared with the 'real' trauma of people engulfed in flames in a rail crash or living through civil unrest, so I kept it to myself.

I rediscovered my model when my daughter became ill and shared it with Ian Gordon-Brown, the founder of the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology in London, who encouraged me further. When my daughter died, I wanted to tear it up and throw it away. I hated the title, *'Trauma - an opportunity for growth?'* How could I ever suggest such an idea to anyone feeling this level of pain? But then I found myself using it as a guide and thus another cycle of learning that developed the model further began.

## THE BIRTH OF THE MODEL

The model was finally given birth at a seminar in 1994. I was a member of an action research group, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see section B4). Our task, to produce a book on the integration of our learning from disasters into our professional practice, became stuck and as we struggled to find a way through, someone mentioned circular paths. It reminded me of the circles and spirals of my map, so I showed it to the group. It immediately galvanised them, acting as a cog that moved the writing process forward and forming the central fulcrum from which the stories hung (Mead, 1996:3). Since then it has often felt as if the model has taken on a life of its own. With time, I saw how it shone a light down the path of others trying to make sense of their traumatic experiences and became their guide and inspiration. Thus the map became my basic tool for transforming my experience into useful practice. As Scott and Straddling found, in times of emergency, orientation is important:

*"...mapping out for the client the sort of difficulties that might be encountered and the directions from which means to resolve the problems might be found. The goal... is to help the client get their bearings."*

- Scott & Stradling, 1992, Appdx. D

This exploration has been a living enquiry and major part of my life since 1987, learning from the inside of the experience while casting an enquiring and reflective eye from the outside. It concerns the transformation of my post-Hungerford crisis into a strategy of sense-making and survival. As I struggled to find my feet in the strange territory of my crisis, I began to map it as I walked it. It was a cyclical development reminiscent of the ebb and flow of career paths of the female managers described by Judi Marshall (1989:275-91) where periods of 'stagnation' were, with hindsight, re-framed as important times for incubation and regeneration.

### **A reflection on the methods by which I developed the model**

The process by which I developed the model places it within the action research mode through several characteristics (Reason, 2001), including its timeliness and practical use, its participative and empowering approach and its validation of many forms of knowing. It is rooted in my moment-to-moment action and reflection on my experience and acts as a guide for enquiry and action, both professionally and personally. Its development required my own in-depth and critical enquiry into my experience as I lived it and demands this of others who may use, adapt or be inspired by it.

When I began developing my model, I was working essentially from experience though it was experience grounded in a strong professional practice in other fields. I have gathered my data by operating personally and professionally with an enquiring mind, living my ideas and feeding my learning back to myself and outwards to others, since I had no resources to undertake systematic research. This practice of living one's learning (Marshall, 1999; Whitehead, 1993) bridges practice and research, and often makes them indistinguishable.

As I developed the ideas, I interwove and moved through the four forms of knowing (Heron, 1981b), beginning with my lived **experience**, building on many previous experiences. I already had strong images of voids and whirlpools (phases of my model) from meditations at a Zen Retreat in Wales a few years before. From my first disaster experience, I began to share my struggle with others and was guided towards books that increased my **cognitive** understanding of my experience and inspired me to search further and deeper. From this I made sense through the **presentational** form of a map. As I refined this map, I explored its connections with the experiences of others, directly and through biography and research studies. Once my map surfaced in public, I gathered more insights around it, thus tapping into knowing through **practice**. After that I used it more and gained more uses for it. By this time, all four styles of knowing were interweaving and feeding into each other, as I added more experiences and more types of practice. Writing about my model for this thesis, I have returned to a deeper study of theories and philosophies to see where they lie in relation to each other.

## CLAIMS FOR THE MODEL

My claim for this model is that it has been useful to me and useful to others trying to find their own path through uncharted territory. It is a holistic working model about the subjective relationship with the objective reality of our disaster, and how its impact can be changed as it is lived. It is a personal construct, so rises above many external current debates in this field about how disaster and trauma should be defined, as well as the arguments about whether it is predominantly about negative suffering or growth and transformation. It is inclusive of many views of traumatic incidents and reactions: social constructivist (Summerfield, 2001; Papadopoulos, 2001; Davis, 1999), medical-psycho-biological (APA, 1994), spiritual (Hillman, 1975), political/social justice (Scruton, 2000, 2002, 2003; Davis, 1999, 2001) or medical-legal perspectives (Summerfield, 2001) – all can be accommodated as contributory aspects and the journey contains

both growth and suffering. It is up to the person living their post-trauma process whether they define it by a medical diagnosis, their search for meaning or justice, or changes in their social position.

The model is definitely not a tablet of stone to be used in any fixed or rigid way and it is not an absolute truth about the trauma process or a method which can be generalised and standardised. If I try to use it prescriptively or try to make it fit different situations, it loses its usefulness. When I use it lightly as a guide, it begins to work for me and many more options and ideas open up. The model thus has catalytic validity (Kvale, 1983) and experiential authenticity (McLeod, 1994) and meets other validity criteria discussed in B3, such as encouraging human flourishing in a democratic, respectful manner. For those in crisis after a traumatic event, it can provide either a map where none exists or a model of how to set about surveying and triangulating their own reference points and paths in order to construct their own maps of their own unique journeys. It has also acted as a guide to those who walk alongside trauma as caring professionals, friends and volunteers. Many of my training courses are guided by it or use it as the basis for deeper experience and learning. I have tried to find what Wendell Holmes called 'the simplicity on the far side of complexity' so that it is flexible enough to accommodate many different stories, like a hologram that can be used over many time and spatial dimensions. The value of the model can perhaps best be judged by the fact that other professionals have used it in training, in their post-disaster plans (for example, after the Omagh bomb, Bolton, 1998) and books (Mead, 1994a). In July 2003 it was used by consultants to the Middle Eastern Children's Association of teachers developing joint programmes in Israeli and Palestinian schools at Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex.

Now it is time to describe the map. I present it in a form that has emerged over many years. To readers who have never experienced a crisis that has shaken the core of their being, their self-image and their proven ways of coping, it may have little significance. But I would predict that many who have lived through such life-changing events will be reading this through their own experience, agreeing strongly if it resonates with them and reacting strongly if their experience took a very different path.

## C 2

**THE TRAUMA PROCESS MAP:**  
**A PERSONAL CONSTRUCTION OF EXPERIENCE**

Having described the conception and birth of the model, I shall now present it in its most up-to-date diagrammatic form. I then give an account of the complex and messy growth of the model from its birth to its current form through the following interlocking cycles of enquiry, which I list below with the questions they sought to answer:

- an enquiry into my primary experiences – *"How were these framed by the model?"* (I explain the model by referring to these experiences)
- an enquiry into how I turned the experiences into the form of the model – *"How do I make sense of my experience?"*
- an enquiry into the links between my model and other propositional models – *"How can other theoretical models inform my practice? How does my model contribute to theirs?"*
- an enquiry into how this learning has influenced my practice – *"How can I use my model as an essential part of my practice?"*



## THE TRAUMA PROCESS MAP

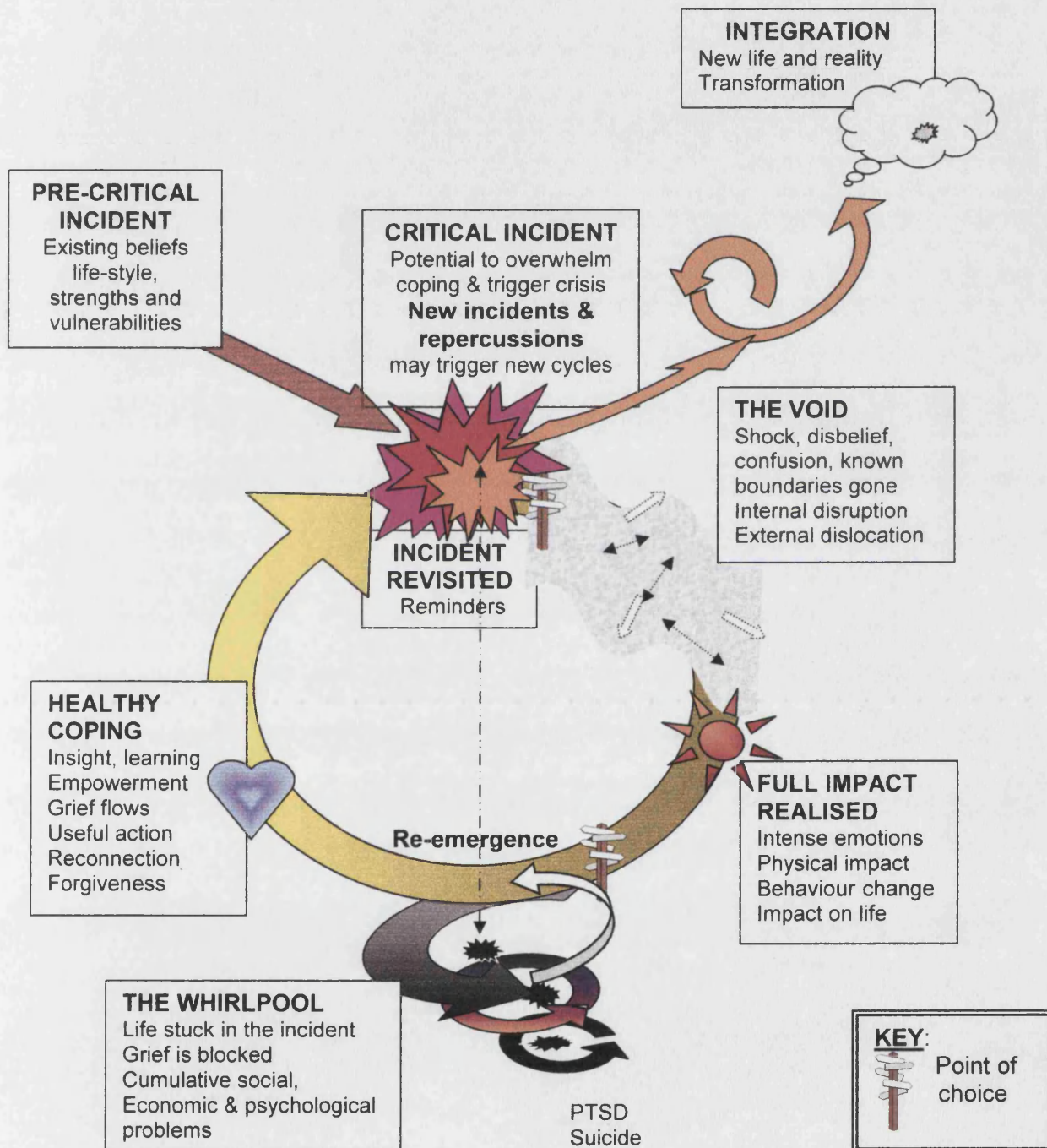
As my cognitive knowledge grew, I feared that the power of my experience, the essence of the model that touched people, might become lost in the need for academic rigour. I therefore decided to present my model in different ways according to the purpose. In this thesis there is an academic purpose so the academic references will be retained, while the booklet I have prepared for training courses has a bias to practical issues and the booklet I am planning for people in crisis will be a work-book designed for use when energy and concentration is poor. In the end, my model is for such people, the people who are in a similar place from which my model grew, when most of my resources were immobilised and I could not read complex texts. My message to them is, *"If I can do it from that place, then there is the possibility you can too. Here's a map to help you start and some methods for constructing your own."*

The early diagrams were very simple 2-D representations of spirals, limited mainly by my limited computer graphic skills. The later version (Diagram 2, overleaf) is a little more complex but closeness to reality has been compromised by the need to give people an image they can remember and use in difficult times. I had difficulty drawing a 3-D spiral on computer (Diagram 3, p.117), but I had feedback that the 'plates' tipping all ways really did represent people's reality so I decided that imperfectly drawn representations could also be useful. Though I was not initially inclined to divide the model into phases, I decided to do so for the sake of clarity. Some phases actually do feel very clear-cut in reality and the move from one to the other can be quite sudden. However, they may also overlap considerably and several spirals may be operating together at different times and speeds, for example I often felt that I was in separate emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive spirals. A survivor of the Berkshire rail crash, 2004, has told me exactly the same – her head is far in advance of her body and emotions.

When communicating the model in workshops, I often reveal the model on the floor using a rope. I ask the group to add images from art and literature to each phase. Metaphor and pictures are used when time is limited and with people from different cultures and abilities. Using metaphor, acts as a buffer that absorbs reactivated distress and makes learning easier. The labels in the diagrams are simplified for use in lectures and workshops.

**DIAGRAM 2: THE TRAUMA PROCESS MAP (2004 version)**

There is no specified time-scale. Micro-cycles taking minutes co-exist with macro-cycles over months and years. Complex patterns may operate within each other, spiralling up and down to make up the whole journey.

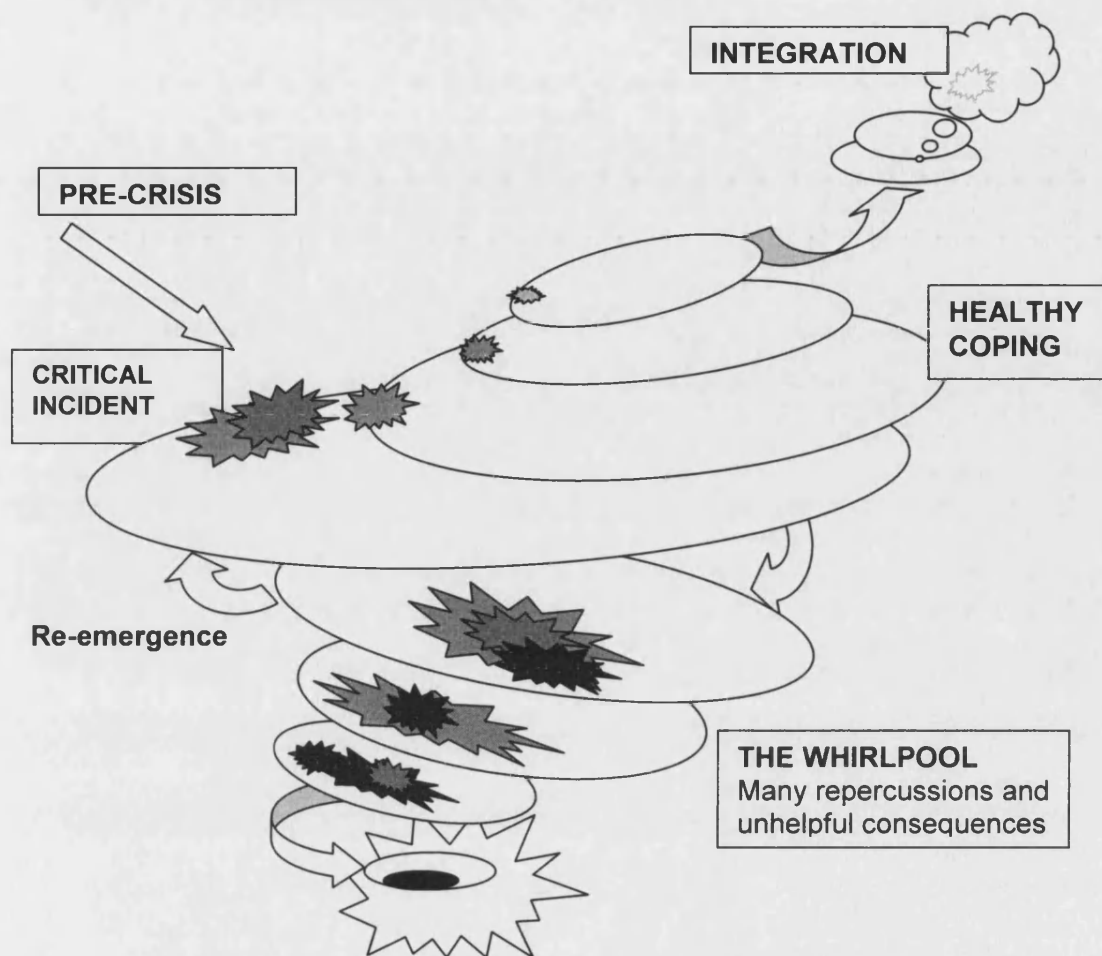


## **DIAGRAM 2 cont'd: THE CCME TRAUMA RESPONSE CYCLE: A SYNOPSIS**

This model is a simple representation of very complex dynamics. There is no time scale for each phase or for the whole cycle. Several cycles may operate at once at different time scales. People cycle round many times before moving beyond their trauma. It will not fit every experience - **it is a map to be used as a guide and one manifestation of a method to help people draw their own maps of recovery.**

- **PRE-INCIDENT BELIEFS** - the fixed or mistaken beliefs about self and the world that are likely to be challenged by disaster. People are thrown into crisis when disaster challenges core beliefs, the lynch pin for their stability. Not everyone is thrown into crisis even if the incident is traumatic - it depends on the strength and variety of their coping and the personal significance of their losses.
- **THE CRITICAL INCIDENT** - challenges all aspects of a person - physical, emotional, spiritual and can affect their family, social and economic context. It is defined here as a betrayal - It shouldn't have happened like this, why me? Why did they let it happen? It may feel like a betrayal of life.
- **'THE VOID'** - the world feels as if it is turned upside down, nothing makes sense, people are in shock and the feelings underneath are intense. Others may try to 'move people on' or be over-protective. The emptiness and confusion may be masked by distraction, avoidance, keeping busy and alcohol. Offers of help may be rejected, but some are at their most receptive to help, if it is given sensitively. They need 'permission' and safe places to 'gather their thoughts and feelings' and reduce the risk of unhelpful coping or activity. Methods include: Listening, quality presence alongside the distress, practical support, mobilising local support and self-help, finding a place for reflection, group support, getting the facts straight, supportive rituals. When the shock and numbness subside strong feelings begin to be felt, as the full impact is realised.
- **THE FULL IMPACT EMERGES** in terms of intense feelings and the impact on all aspects of health, relationships and life. Help can be given to reduce the risk of reactive reactions and actions that may cause further problems. The choices made will influence which of the next two phases are chosen.
- **'THE WHIRLPOOL'** - Life is defined by, & stuck in, the incident. Feelings are turned into actions against self or others. Unhealthy coping creates more stress as an avoidance of the primary distress. Guilt is turned to blaming and scape-goating, anger to bitterness and revenge, sadness to self-pity and depression. These routes impact on family, health, work and society, creating secondary trauma. This downward spiral is difficult to leave unaided, some choose suicide or develop full PTSD. Medical treatments may be needed and families and friends need good support. But the 'pit' may be a turning point leading to growth.
- **RE-EMERGENCE** from the whirlpool needs good support and may take several attempts.
- **HEALTHY COPING** - The reality of the incident is accepted, but there is choice about perceptions and actions. Control of life is resumed. Life has more colour and love, trust and fun are again possible. Pain is transformed into positive actions, learning or projects. There may be an aspiration to explore forgiveness.
- **REVISITING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT** - reminders of the incident re-trigger emotions and physical sensations - the most characteristic feature of trauma reactions. They can be a physical or symbolic such as location, reminiscent sounds, smells, sights, tastes, TV programmes & people. Anniversaries and festivals remind what has been lost. The task: to identify triggers, prepare, manage and review them. The aim: to make reminders less troublesome by defusing their emotional charge and stimulating the brain to store them as memory. They may plunge the person into another cycle of the process,
- **MOVING BEYOND THE INCIDENT (INTEGRATION)** - the incident is no longer the main focus of life, with room for new interests. New dimensions of life and living have been discovered and realities about what the world really is, not what it 'should be', are accepted. There is often a change of direction, values or life style.

**DIAGRAM 3: TRAUMA PROCESS MAP (1999 version)**



**THE JOURNEY DEPENDS ON:**

- Existing personality
- Past history
- Current situation & stresses
- Personal significance of the incident
- Coping styles and support networks
- The quality of help offered and taken
- The choices made by the person
- Post-incident repercussions
- Subsequent life events
- The inter-action with the statutory and legal recovery environment

## **PLACING MY PRIMARY EXPERIENCE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MAP**

Doing this was an iterative process, a conversation between my experience and the map I was creating. The process was deepened as I gained greater insights about my first disaster experience from my work and when I began showing it to other people. This is how mapping and these experiences shaped each other and became the Trauma Process Map.

### **PRE-CRISIS PHASE**

Mainly through therapy and personal reflection, I worked out the factors and underlying personal beliefs that undoubtedly played a part in my future journey. I can discern certain beliefs I carried about my work situation that did not stand the challenge of my crisis. These are a few of the many that I discovered as I progressed through my journey. Others have already been referred to in sections B1.

- managers in a caring organisation will care for staff
- managers in an Education Department would be interested in learning and passing on learning to others.
- my observations and intuition, backed by experience and information, would be believed.
- I was a quiet, hardworking, highly motivated and professional employee who avoided conflict and would therefore never be involved in a major conflict with my bosses.
- If I worked hard, and especially if I took on the challenge of a disaster response, I would be noticed and rewarded

### **THE CRITICAL EVENT**

The Hungerford disaster was the traumatic incident that precipitated the repercussions which, when brought into relationship with the complexity of myself and my context triggered my personal crisis. My 'Hungerford' story has already been told and I will only repeat here that the work was challenging but I was not overwhelmed by it. I had worked out my role and had an action research attitude that said, 'I can to work out what can be done using the skills I have and will seek information and advice about what I don't know from sources I shall set about finding.' I was back in my old familiar entrepreneurial, community work style.

As the weeks went by and I became more involved, I was increasingly hearing the anger of local people towards the police, God and other authority figures. I began to identify with them and began to mirror some of the reactions and behaviour of the primary disaster community. I was exhausted by hearing horrific stories, the unbelievable extra work created by the response and trying to keep on top of my usual work-load. I found it hard to concentrate, read and write reports. I had invested trust in my organisation that I would be understood and supported. They did not meet my expectations. When their actions moved beyond my comprehension, I felt deeply betrayed. Lack of understanding from colleagues and bosses and negative responses, not just lack of support, on top of this finally overwhelmed my capacity to cope and confounded my existing belief system. I felt as if the rug had been pulled from under me and my crisis was precipitated with the belief: 'I cannot cope with this, it's so unfair, everyone is against me, there must be something wrong with me. I cannot see any way out of this.' Thus I chose the way I would appraise the situation and react.

#### **'THE VOID': The immediate aftermath**

A period of emptiness and confusion, 'the Void', was brought on by my crisis. The usual signposts and frameworks making sense of self and life had gone. I felt I was odd, 'going crazy' and completely on my own, not knowing how to deal with the intense pain, sadness, anger, loss, fear, and guilt. For a year after the shootings, the repercussions resulted in loss of energy and motivation, trust and, the worst loss of all, hope. I trusted few people and no one at work and I felt silenced and immobilised.

A drawing of how I felt at the time, showed me as a lost figure, head bowed, weeping and hung out like washing on a clothes line. I was enclosed in a circle of stakes placing barriers between me and the outside world. I felt unworthy to receive contact from outside. I neither knew who I was nor knew the world I was in. I felt too afraid to move and to start exploring. I felt I had nowhere to go for comfort, or permission to do so since I had not been bereaved or injured and I wasn't even in Hungerford at the time of the shootings. When I asked for support at work, I was labelled as weak. I did not trust the counsellor they offered and I lost trust in finding alternatives. At first I filled the void with illness and depression. I continued to work but without energy and motivation. The first turning point came with the interview for the Youth Journal article (Scott, 1988) through which our experience was at last articulated. Its publication acted as the force which brought my crisis to a head and created more stress and betrayal, but also took me out of the numbness of the 'Void'.

## **THE FULL IMPACT EMERGES**

The lifting of the numbness and depression of the 'Void', aided by the additional attacks by my bosses, was marked by a change in physical reactions. Whenever a brown envelope arrived from my boss, my hands began to shake uncontrollably. Anger, with an intensity I had never before experienced, erupted as the full realisation of the impact of the shootings and its repercussions hit me. I could see very clearly how my future at work would be changed and this added to my pessimism and anger. In any case, a cycle of anger and counter-anger had already been set up with my bosses and I felt I did not know how to shake off the labels I had been given.

The disruption of our relocation from Bath gained significance as my old personal and professional supports had not been replaced. Creating new ones in Berkshire had proved difficult and now became almost impossible after the shootings as I trusted no one including myself. I became consumed with grief over my lost life and rage about my bosses. Another point of choice was reached when I was faced with the question, 'What do I do with this rage?' I was so consumed by it that I could not stand back and reflect on it. I felt I had no choice and I began to tumble into the route that sucked me into the whirlpool.

## **THE 'WHIRLPOOL' (or Downward Spiral)**

I turned my rage into bitterness, cynicism and paranoia and I could not comprehend that I could have taken any other route. I was driven by the wish to take revenge. I noticed that in work meetings and training events, my anger and distress was easily triggered and my cynicism would be immediate and sharp. Once, an external trainer recognised and acknowledged the real person and hurt behind my actions, and I felt immense gratitude and relief, but mostly no one understood. Like those who glimpsed the Gorgon's head, they were either immobilised by how I ranted or they reacted angrily to my displaced reactions. It all went beyond my logic. I could not make sense of them and I could not tolerate the situation any more than others could tolerate me, so I tended to withdraw further. Social situations became very difficult and real enjoyment of anything seemed to be a thing of the past as the cloud was always there. An Afghani engineer from I met in Jordan said, "God never comes to those who sit on their sorrow". At the point of greatest despair and hopelessness, no help seemed to come from anywhere – and I probably wouldn't have recognised it if it did. This was what was meant by being stuck. Every part of my being was defined by and related to the shootings and its repercussions.

I had a glimpse into a deeper abyss when I finally resigned from my job and the drop in our income, on which our mortgage depended, meant that losing our home was a reality. This fear and my guilt added to the periods of deep immobilising despair which of course could have made the fear a reality.

Being in the whirlpool did not mean an absence of active attempts at more positive coping, as this is not a simplistic cycle of well defined phases. Coping strategies were still to be found in my despair, but were easily destroyed. I was lucky that I stayed in the upper reaches of the whirlpool. In fact I felt I never had sufficient courage to break completely and surrender to the abyss. However, I didn't find a way out completely for about six years after the shootings, though I had made several false attempts.

## RE-EMERGENCE

The false alarms, when I believed I had left the 'Whirlpool' and re-entered the healthy coping phase of the cycle, were among the most depressing features of my journey. My belief that I was 'better' and back to 'normal' lacked substance and, with this realisation, I plunged back into the 'Whirlpool'. Here I found empathy with Old Testament Job, but not his patience, and solace in Psalm 88, recommended by an Anglican priest to be shouted from the top of the stairs to a God big enough to take anyone's anger. I remember despairing that after all my efforts I was back where I was before and felt all hope was lost. I had mistakenly believed that effort deserved reward and was under the misapprehension that my bosses might recognise the efforts I was making and so be a little kinder while I felt my way back to 'normality'.

The first move out of the 'Whirlpool' came from meeting other disaster workers from the Lockerbie and Hillsborough disasters, made sweeter because this had come from my 'victory' over my boss's obstructive behaviour. It was then aided by my stand against his ban on me speaking to the media after an unplanned sequence of events led to my story being included in an article in the Sunday Times (June, 1989). I left Berkshire with my head held high after an empowering leaving speech, based on the fairy story of the '*Princess and the Frog*', fuelled by my anger at his attempts to stop colleagues give me a leaving present. The post I was moving to also felt like a vindication of what I had done at Hungerford - a part-time post with a newly formed Disaster Consultancy run by people I had met in Lockerbie and Merseyside.

But I re-emerged before I had really consolidated my position and I soon found myself in another crisis with another boss whose behaviour towards me and other female staff



could only be described as unreasonable and at times bullying. I was however wiser this time and escaped within four months. His actions afterwards, delaying benefits and the start of my Government Business Enterprise Allowance for nearly a year, took me right back into the whirlpool to a deeper level than before. With no job and no income of my own, my past learning and in-built tendency towards action research came to the fore and three questions emerged, two related to my disaster experience and one related to gender issues in the workplace. These questions gave me a purpose and focussed my search for answers, motivating me to make contact with people who could help. This networking reduced my feelings of isolation and low self-worth. My gender questions led me to Bath University to meet Judi Marshall, who I had met a few years earlier at a conference for Women Managers, and this was an early stepping stone to joining the CARPP programme seven years later. Reflecting back, I realised my move into active coping was rapid, just a month after my latest critical experience and in spite of the intense despair I felt. This also shows how my map cannot be seen as a simple journey of separate, sequential phases. Healthy coping was present from the start, working away in the background.

Back in the 'Whirlpool', I fought shame and isolation to re-build my confidence and strength, slowly but more surely. Receiving the Churchill Fellowship was a significant breakthrough, as was my visit to the Community Stress Prevention Centre in Israel. I suddenly found my voice was being heard and my experiences were being affirmed as I went around the world to Australia, New Zealand and California. I met people involved in a wide variety of disasters and traumas who had similar experiences involving managers who did not understand the impact of disaster work. I also found many others who shared my concerns about the denial of children's needs and my thoughts about the role of schools and Education Authorities. In Israel and Australia especially, I found an openness to different ideas that was refreshing and I no longer felt an oddity. Re-connecting with the place where I grew up in Sydney and people from my childhood gave me the feeling of belonging. I recognised how that place had left its influence on me and it became another step forward...

My business also began to take off and by 1993 I had undertaken a series of workshops in the UK and New York with Dr Kendall Johnson. I was preparing to leave to be a keynote speaker at conferences in Australia and New Zealand when my re-emergence received its heaviest blow. My 16 year old daughter, Ann, died just 40 days after her diagnosis from a form of leukaemia that was very rare in girls of her age.

The complexity of my post-Hungerford journey was no less complex than for many others I have met, whether disaster workers, bereaved or direct victims. Lightning can strike twice and more. Ann's illness and death came during one of my 're-emergence' attempts so I shall interrupt my account to take you briefly on a tour of the cycle that this triggered and which intertwined with my post-Hungerford journey. If this is confusing for readers, it is only a mirror of my confusion while living this reality.

### **Another trauma cycle within the main spiral**

*This much more personal traumatic experience stopped me in my tracks and all the clichés and ingrained thoughts flooded my brain – “man proposes, God disposes”, “cruel fate”, “why our family again?”, “I am being punished – for being a working mother, for being away on my Fellowship the summer before, for being so engrossed in my work, for being so affected by the Hungerford shootings over the last years of her life” – and any other illogical reason I could find. I discovered how, in moments of intense fear, rational beliefs are overturned by more primitive fears and perspectives.*

*My new **pre-crisis state** was different from my pre-Hungerford state, changed by the disaster work experience. My threshold for dealing with stress had been strengthened in some ways, but in others it had been weakened by cynicism, exhaustion and the feeling that I did not deserve more stress so soon. The **traumatic incident** was composed of the initial shock of the diagnosis and then her unexpected, premature death. After Ann's diagnosis, **the void** was filled with numbness and fear but also masked by the necessary frenetic activity of illness. It was a rollercoaster of endless waiting (for appointments, for results, for decisions, for free beds and finally for death) interspersed with dashing from hospital to home. Ann filled her void, when she had the energy, by keeping a check on her medication and the results of her various treatments, pointing out when they were incorrect. Eventually, exhaustion pushed me into finding a time and place to gather myself and I escaped for a few days to a colleague's house on Dartmoor. There, I unknowingly prepared myself to face the unexpected next point of **traumatic shock** the sudden turn of events and the horrendous journey back to Oxford just in time for her dying. Following her death, **the void** was filled with all the activity of the rituals and bureaucracy of death and dealing with other people's reactions. How I longed for a place of safe retreat, not alone but without the need to engage; with gentle occupation but no stressful demands. Maybe my*

*ideal was unattainable, but I never really found it, except in brief moments I created for myself.*

*The emergence **from the void** after Ann's death and the **realisation of the full impact** happened haphazardly. The full extent of the pain was revealed with increasing intensity as the numbness subsided and reactions were re-triggered by certain pieces of music, family events and other sensory reminders. The pain could only be handled for short bursts of time. The impact on work, relationships and health was realised over a much longer time-span in subsequent journeys round the cycle. The impact on me has been prolonged by watching the impact on our other children and Ann's friends whose grieving was put on hold to deal with growing up, exams and leaving home and can be seen in different forms, a decade later. However, I had learnt the dangers of falling into **the whirlpool**. Though I felt anger and despair about many things to do with Ann's illness, death and the repercussions, I knew I had choices and did not want to fall into the self-destructive force of the whirlpool again. I looked back at my despair since Hungerford and felt guilty about the fact that I had not been my cheerful self for much of what turned out to be Ann's last years. Depression and cynicism seemed such a waste of time and this realisation finally shook me out of the Hungerford whirlpool and I resolved not to take this path of self-destruction again. Ann was annoyed at any suggestion that I might let her illness stop me from working and she told me this experience might enhance it. Not to carry on would have felt like a betrayal of the horror of her experience. I dipped into the 'whirlpool' occasionally, but never for long, though I found myself in it again during the 10th anniversary period.*

I now return to my main account which is now a combination of my Hungerford and my personal bereavement journey.

I survived each of these set-backs by believing in my ability to be persistent and survive. I found comfort in the word 'endure' and stories of endurance when hope had gone. I remembered how I used to train as a hockey player and athlete, perfecting shots by practising over and over again and building up stamina and speed through the rituals of regular training. I was propelled into recycling the pain of her death into something useful rather than being sunk by it.

## THE HEALTHY COPING CHOICES

When explaining a personal model, it is tempting to over-simplify. The reality is often very different, and the phases are more like trends or dominant themes at different times. In my own experience, I believe I was making healthy choices about the way I coped from the start, but often the range and nature of them were insufficient to cope with what I was experiencing from external sources. This phase of healthy coping did not become dominant until several years after Ann's death and the model itself by this time was playing a major part in its emergence.

I did not really recognise that I had arrived at this healthier place until I got there and the world suddenly seemed brighter and more joyous than where I had just been.

Often the things that made a difference were small and simple. Just opening ones eyes and looking outward, whether at people or the simple beauties of a snowdrop or bluebell helped reverse the looking inwards into bleak despair. At other times the methods were tough and challenging. Through my personal consultancy sessions and later through therapy, I had to face my own contribution to my post-Hungerford situation, for example, how and why I repeatedly found myself in scenarios where I became the victim of certain styles of bullying management. At other times, I found the non-talking, physical therapies more helpful. The healing hands of a skilled cranial osteopath could deal with pain and trauma embedded deeply in my body more gently and effectively than talking. When the body was stronger, my capacity for dealing with emotions and other issues was increased. I have since gained cognitive understanding of this from the research of Bessel van der Kolk (1994, van der Kolk et al, 1991, 1996)

The path was never simple, however, and there were still issues that I had to work through over many years. For instance, in the case of the betrayal issue, I learnt that however much responsibility a person takes for their own recovery, others also have a responsibility for their actions towards them. I noticed that the mention of the two bosses who I felt had treated me so badly, aroused such an intense anger that I would degenerate into a rant which was neither professional nor good for me. I recognised it in others who had felt betrayed by these people and it helped that I was not alone in my rage. I realised that neither men had any idea what their management styles had done to us. Until my pain had some recognition from them, no amount of therapy brought a sense of healing. It helped a little reading a former colleague's MA research about the discontent that former colleagues had felt over the way they were managed (O'Keeffe, 1999). In 1999 I wrote just after meeting my Berkshire manager again:

*"Now he (one of my bosses) has retired with an enhanced redundancy package and pension, bitterness can easily creep in. Yet forgiveness has been more possible as the benefits of the 'salt of wisdom begin to outweigh the salt of bitterness' and if the 'remembrance of wrong can be transformed into a wider context' (Hillman, 1975). Being able to learn from the experiences and offer the learning to others in a wider context has been my positive and self-affirming way out of the darkness which has enabled me to build trust in self and others and to reconnect with the world. When I met X again, he seemed so sad and insignificant now he has retired that I wondered why I had wasted so much of my life, health and energy being so terrorised by him. But this is now, that was then. I must not deny my experience - and the learning has been fruitful."*

At the end of 2001, I heard that this man had died suddenly. A month later, as a result of an unexpected sequence of events, the other ex-boss sent me an e-mail apologising for how he had treated me 12 years before. I felt that a great burden had been released and 'the ghosts' of the past had disappeared from the 'attic' of my mind. These events happened while I was writing my section on scape-goating. I felt light and a little strange about the empty space I no longer needed to fill with anger and resentment. Any resentment about the one who died, died with him. The experience of being given an apology by the other affirmed my belief that it doesn't take much from the 'betrayal' to release the betrayed from their grip – just a little recognition, a genuine expression of regret and possibly some recompense. In neither case did I receive recompense for my substantial losses, except the recompense in what I have learned and what I can offer practically to others.

This journey can never be idealised, however. An article on betrayal and forgiveness by Ben Fuchs (1997), also inspired by James Hillman's book, made me realise that some of my attempts at recovery were merely a form of self-betrayal and moral righteousness. They were disguised attempts to defeat my betrayers and prove them wrong. Thus I was kept tied firmly to them and the critical incidents they precipitated. If the purpose is not generative, then health does not result.

I conclude that all any human being can do is aspire to reach this stage 'as if' it were possible. I could be an active participant in my own recovery, but reaching this point and especially the readiness to forgive, could not be forced. It felt to me as if it arrived

as a gift, a sudden realisation that I was in this region of growth rather than being stuck. Maybe actions and rational thinking can only prepare the ground in which forgiveness can be recognised and received. Other survivors I have met have had similar experiences and often describe the process, like me, in terms of a spiritual experience.

### **REMINDERS: REVISITING THE TRAUMATIC EVENT**

Reminders of my crises happened both unexpectedly and with full intention to remember. My previous experience of therapeutic work meant I was able to frame any unexpected distressing intrusions as useful testers of my progress, telling me what still had to be resolved.

Reminders in relation to the Hungerford events sometimes surprised me and I was less prepared for my reaction. For example, I experienced an intense tingling in my body, on hearing a radio play which mentioned the shootings and therefore acknowledged it as an event which was part of national consciousness and history. A similar sensation occurred for several years when I drove past the Savernake Forest, the site of his first murder, and along the route that Michael Ryan took to Hungerford after his first killing. I was interested in the fact that I had no reactions to being in the Youth Centre and school where Ryan killed himself, perhaps because I was there so often afterwards that my associations with the place had moved on from the disaster.

Much more intense and uncomfortable were the reminders reactivating memories of the denial of young people's reactions, the arrogance and disrespect shown to the Youth Service staff by other professions and the issues with my managers. They were the reminders of the most personal and direct experience of threat to my self-image, integrity and economic security. I had to be watchful of such reminders in later disasters and traumas, for example in the story in E3, and when dealing with some Health Authority officials and scientists during the Newbury Community Epidemiology study after my daughter's death (Capewell, 1998c). Official letters in brown envelopes and reminders of the shouting and verbal abuse of my Berkshire boss also reactivated enough fear to immobilise me. I suspect that unresolved issues from his bullying contributed to my difficulties with the second boss because he sensed my defensiveness and vulnerability.

Reading about disasters was exceptionally difficult, both because of poor concentration and memory and the emotions reactivated. I became excited and angry by writings that resonated with my experiences and affirmed that I was not as wrong as my bosses had

implied. I reacted to purely academic research without a hint of inside experience and to work that promoted narrow views of trauma. The constant reading, writing and revision of texts for this thesis have contributed considerably to the decrease of this re-activation. Re-reading and editing my own articles and sections of this thesis, including this one my writing about my model, has been a long and difficult process.

Events and experiences are revisited every time I run a seminar or workshop. It is healing to do so in that it gives me a platform for passing on what I have learnt, as well as developing my ideas and insights from having to think about what I say and reflecting on challenges from the participants. Doing this has an emotional and physical cost and I manage this by not working alone where possible, protecting my private space, having supervision and pacing my work-load.

Sometimes I am aware that the reminders are difficult and I either confront or avoid them. Working freelance rather than as an employee might in itself be a form of avoidance of the situations where I could again be made a scapegoat. Even though I know the signs and can anticipate when it might happen, having to take action needs more energy than I choose to give. Being independent and in charge of when and where I choose to work has many advantages that I would be reluctant to relinquish for the sake of confronting old wounds.

The seemingly illogical nature of some of my reactions was hard to tolerate, especially a professional with a reputation to uphold, and the fact that they seem so improbable can in itself be another trigger for feelings of shame and guilt about my reactions after the shootings. I accepted these re-stimulated feelings and reactions as part of my life and did not think of relieving myself of them until I mentioned a particular scenario during an acupuncture session about five years after the shootings. My acupuncturist was also a Master NLP practitioner and she taught me the visual-kinaesthetic self-help techniques used in Neuro-Linguistic programming for reducing distressing images (Andreas, 1989). The method helped what I call my 'peak' reactions, but they came too late to deal with the longer term issues. However, this method is one of my most effective tools in my work with people soon after a traumatic incident.

It was, however, the removal of my 'betrayal bosses' from my mind that really made it possible to revisit reminders of my crises with a detachment and distance that means they are properly stored memories rather than un-filed images.

## **MOVING BEYOND THE DISASTER FRAME**

This is the phase where a person's life is no longer framed and defined by the disaster. Their experience has been transformed into something that takes them beyond it and they can truly 'let go' of this aspect of their lives without forgetting it happened. It may only be reached without too much difficulty by the most enlightened or those blessed with the pre-requisites for good recovery - a secure history, a minimum of other stressors and previous vulnerabilities, good coping skills, and good supportive relationships. Others may reach it via the depths of the whirlpool, finding their way out either through a long period of painful self-learning or with good professional help. Those who do arrive may find that the crisis/betrayal experience is the gateway to the profound spiritual experiences that accompany forgiveness and reconciliation and allow them to move to beyond the trauma.

I cannot be certain that I have fully completed my cycles around my Hungerford experiences and moved right out of its influence. I have certainly not completed the ups and downs of my personal tragedy of Ann's death. Though the moment of death has passed, the loss will never end as it is continually reassessed by new life events. I have had too many experiences of falling back into despair, though I find my escape more quickly now. Some of the specific sensory reminders and the experiences that caused my crises now have a sense of being in the past, properly stored as memory. The Hungerford shootings increasingly feel as if they happened as long ago as other events of that year, though I am still taken by surprise when others cannot remember their date. My daughter's death can still feel as if it happened yesterday and the thought that it happened back in 1993 feels weird and unbelievable. At times I cannot contemplate how we have survived that long without her and soon this will be as long as she was with us. I rebel at the thought - I do not want to be so far from her.

However, I do have a sense of what the task is about and that it is worth doing. I have gone beyond mere survival and coping. Inadequacies and set-backs are no longer a barrier to moving forward and acting powerfully, even when feeling small and insignificant. My words and actions have the credibility of being grounded in real and deep experiences, rather than in theoretical learning. Whether I have moved beyond coping to a deeper transformation in my everyday life, I am not so sure though I have had moments when I have glimpsed it. Much depends on how transformation is defined. One thing I notice. The more I progressed around the map, the more congruent all aspects of myself became and my different channels –heart, head, body/behaviour and spirit, were no longer in different parts of the cycle.



I believe I am over the threshold of having my life defined by disaster and death, though being so strongly identified by this work keeps me in the frame. Writing this thesis continues the processing of the experiences and, when it is complete, may mark a major turning point in my life where I can accept that disaster work is a choice but I am not a martyr to it.

I reflect on why I still work with disaster and trauma. Does it mean I am still held within the trauma spiral and am using it to resolve unfinished business? I feel that this is less the case now. The beginning of the transition out of my crisis frame came with the departure of the 'ghosts' of the people who I felt had treated me badly. Since the 'ghosts' left, I have a sense that I am released from any emotional need to do this work. I have other choices – a return to other areas of work, the development of new ones, or staying with disaster work and passing on my learning in other ways. Or I can retire without regret. I feel satisfied that I engaged myself fully in 'recycling the pain' (Craig, 1979) from the outset. Though the journey is by no means complete, by entering this process and persisting with all the ups and downs I feel I have been, in Dostoyevsky's words, *'worthy of my suffering'*.

Moving out of my trauma frame could be scary as I have gained much from my work, not least world travel and deep friendships. A subject that terrifies many gives status and power that can be addictive (Raphael, 1986). The loss of these ego nourishing benefits would create another crisis if the gains had not also been more lasting and internal. Moving beyond might also feel like a betrayal of those who suffered and died. I can also feel guilt for not relentlessly pursuing issues, such as our campaign about radiation and leukaemias, as some campaigners do to the detriment of their health and personal lives. But the alternative is to feel guilt for not being available to my family and living children. Sometimes a choice has to be made, even to the extent of following the Biblical injunction, *'Leave the dead to bury the dead.'* Watchfulness and action do not have to be completely forgotten, but they need not take up the whole of one's life. The baton can indeed be entrusted to others. As the great epidemiologist Dr Alice Stewart, who first discovered links between radiation and cancers and was marginalised for it, often said, *"Truth is the daughter of time."* (Green, 1999)

### C 3

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL BEYOND MYSELF

##### THE ENQUIRY

In this cycle of enquiry, I explore how I added knowledge to the development of the model gained in other places. These included other people's primary experiences, other texts of various kinds, literature and creative forms such as TV documentaries. I also added further practical knowledge from other disaster work and from running further training courses. It shows how the model that finally emerged, along with its applications, is a co-creation of all my inter-actions with these forms of knowledge. Space means I can only present the tip of a very big iceberg of explorations and learning about the variations and subtleties of application of the whole model and each part..

Committing my model to paper risked losing its living, organic and ever changing nature. The early task and stage models of bereavement (Parkes, 1972; Worden, 1982) suffered from being petrified on paper, taken too literally and disseminated too simplistically. I once again urge readers to remember that a map is just a representation of the territory. One can only discover its nature by walking it, breathing it and digging into it, either by oneself or working with others. As Jung once said, *"To know a cow is to experience a cow – not read about one."* It is impossible to understand the smell of a cow fully from a written description.

Several disaster survivors have told me they value my constant reminders that this a simplified map of a very complex journey. I therefore repeat them now. It resonates for others but may not do so for you, especially if you have never known the strange world of disaster and the strange head many feel it gives them. It is useful as a tool for enabling other processes to happen, even if only in a dialogue about where it doesn't fit someone's experience. It is not a universal truth, rather a gathering of knowledge for practical use. I now offer some reflections on how the model was developed further.

## GENERAL REFLECTIONS

I have reflected on my model to discern underlying beliefs about trauma, crisis and bereavement so readers can be clear about the perspective in which it has been framed. Some of the most obvious are:

- the concept of **betrayal** is central to the model - the interpretation of the incident by the person or group involved as a betrayal has the capacity to turn the experience into a crisis or trauma and the power to produce intense reactions. The disaster sociologist, Horlick-Jones (1995), also frames disaster a '**betrayal experience**'.
- that humans are **geared to survival** – they are self-determining participants in the process and there will be an in-built move to adjust, thus making self-help possible and the ownership of one's own journey essential, even when professional help is employed.
- that humans **prefer balance and harmony** in their lives and feel discomforted by the impact of incidents which shake their equilibrium. Thus, even if they are experiencing '*normal responses to abnormal events*' and are not mentally or physically ill, they will usually want to change their situation and feel 'better' again, either by restoring enough of their old self-image and lifestyle or by readjusting to their new knowledge about their world.
- that people will be happy with **different levels of adjustment**. Some will do no more than is needed to get by while others will do no less than make major transformations either in their material or spiritual lives. Some of course will not find the energy or the will to do either or will go down paths which make their situation worse in other people's eyes.
- that people have **many different ways of coping** open to them, but most do not use them all, often because they are so traumatised. As helpers, our role can be to offer support and information to mobilise internal and external resources to as many people as possible. We may have to work at a systems level in society to remove the blocks which prevent many people finding support or having their needs heard.
- that people have the **right to choose** what they do with what help is offered to them. Mistakes can be a part of the process since they often open up unexpected opportunities for learning, just as time in the 'whirlpool' may lead to a deeper experience of transformation.
- whatever path people choose, they **do not have to do everything alone** and offering support and the benefit of one's experience is a worthwhile human activity. How it is done is crucial and my preference is for **collaborative, co-generative and participative styles of partnership and learning**.

- people who are open and prepared for change and have a **wide range of coping resources and flexible belief systems** have a better chance of adjusting well after trauma. Thus pre-trauma education is helpful, along with preventative support soon after an incident, to mobilise self-help resources reduce the risk of unhelpful reactions and repercussions.
- that people live in a **complex, interconnected system** where single variables cannot be separated and cause and effect cannot easily be determined. Disruptions to this system will therefore be complex and require **holistic, multi-dimensional** approaches to restore balance. Many worthwhile benefits of the journey cannot easily be measured or known in the short-term – it is a journey encompassing all aspects of life within society, not just the psychological response of an individual.
- in line with the early models of trauma and loss (Freud, 1917; Parkes, 1972), I accept the premise that moving forward out of the disaster framework cannot occur until there has been a **'letting go' of redundant attachments** to the past. without having to forget the deceased person. I do not believe this is counter to current ideas of continuing bonds or creating behavioural, emotional and spiritual links with the deceased or past if these contribute to well-being. (Wortman & Silver, 1989; Walter, 1996). In fact, once the attachment to painful memories of the past are cleared, there is room for memories of pleasant times not associated with loss to appear.
- there is a **time and place for all styles of coping** - each has their positive and negative application. If existing styles no longer work, then new ones need to be found or created.
- that there is a need to have general maps and models which can be used lightly to act as **guides to the process** while also encouraging the emergence of subjective individual stories to be heard and told in order to create a new model or theory that is alive for each particular traumatic incident and person
- being the author of one's own post-trauma story **does not mean it has to be done alone** or without the influence and guidance of other people's stories, from real life, the arts, literature and science.

## SOURCES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

The over-riding influence on the framing of the model as a betrayal experience was the work of James Hillman (1975), with the work of Stanley Keleman (1974 ) influencing the representation of the model as a cycle and spiral. Their ideas acted as a catalyst for my own process because of their resonance with my own experience and were the first that helped me make sense of my upside-down world. Once my own ideas were in motion, I put their books aside because I wanted to discover my own articulation of my experiences. I also found that a large part of Hillman's Jungian framing too unfamiliar to grasp intellectually at that time, though I could feel its importance.

Since 1994, the concepts of Adlerian Individual Psychology have provided an integrated theoretical framing of my model. The Adlerian concept that behaviour is chosen, not caused, and chosen in a social context, not determined in isolation was especially enlightening. It also provided useful methods, such as the early recollection method (see B1), that enhanced the practical application of the model and it was firmly embedded in beliefs about the importance of community and social action.

Real-life stories of survivors continue to be most important influences because they already have all aspects of the trauma experience integrated. This is in contrast to many theoretical models that are usually framed within a particular subject expertise or therapeutic tradition that only cover parts of the whole experience. I have collected real stories from my clients, colleagues and survivors who I have met through, for example, Disaster Action, the umbrella group for disaster survivor groups, and the Edge Hill ESRC project. I have heard their stories directly and through their books (e.g. Champion, 1998; North, 2000), via press articles (Partington, Guardian 16th May 1996), and TV documentaries (e.g. BBC2, 1990b, 'Omagh One Year On', ITV, 1999 and many others). One survivor describes her journey in a similar way to mine:

*"can describe my own experience over the last 3-4 years, not as a line, but as a gyroscopic pattern, like a pendulum swinging from positives to negatives, sometimes finding a point of balance"*

- Newman, (2002).

In addition, the arts and literature have provided a rich source from which the real emotion and meaning of experiences can be glimpsed. These include the accounts by Samuel Pepys after the Great Fire of London (Cohen, 1991) and Dickens of his own

trauma after a railway crash in 1865 (Beveridge, 1996:4), novels, such as the story of a traumatised photo-journalist in *'Healing Flynn'* by Juliette Mead (2003), and the raw poems and stories by disaster survivors and witnesses (e.g. poems and stories in the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre newsletters, Interlink (1989-91). Many of these people now have a long-term view of their traumatic experience and can delineate their own patterns and points of choice, helped by my model in some cases. Others have used my map as a means of comparison or to inspire their own. I have used their insights to refine the map, without trying to cover every possibility, or to illustrate why there is never one way of viewing the post-trauma journey.

Non-academic sources have been important for developing the later stages of the model rarely touched by clinical researchers, where themes are the major issues of life, religion and philosophy, such as forgiveness and transcendence, discussed in more detail later in Part C. For example, I often spend time meditating on the dramatic Stanley Spencer murals, based on his First World War experiences, in the Burghclere Memorial chapel near my home. The murals depict the horror and banality of war, and include an image of a shell-shocked soldier, deep in the 'whirlpool' of my model, stretched full length obsessively scrubbing a hospital floor. Well known paintings, such as those by Edvard Munch deepened my tacit understanding of the void, intense emotions and whirlpool of my model. Proust's *'A La Recherche du Temps Perdu'*, in which childhood memories of his Tante Léonie were evoked many years later by lime tea and Madeleines, just like she used to give him, make more immediate sense to people than scientific explanations of reactivated sensory images. The poetry of T. S. Eliot was a source of great inspiration in my own walk through dark places and the following lines give the view that this is an essential part of the whole journey into the unknown:

*'In order to arrive there,  
To arrive where you are not, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.'*  
- East Coker III, The Four Quartets (1940)

My model developed through challenges and affirmations from many sources. Some people challenged the underlying structure of the model and told me it should be this way or that. I noticed my resistance to some challenges and enquired of myself why this was so. My answer was that this was basically a model of my experience, not theirs, and if mine did not suit them, they needed to draw their own. My resentment

was about the dogmatic, non-enquiring nature of their challenges and the fear of my own experience being denied again by people who had not lived it and had not spent the years finding this form to frame it.

I will now explore some of the issues raised that set me off into further enquiry and also present some of the key experiences that helped me enhance my understanding of the model and how it could be applied.

## **PROBLEMS OF TERMINOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF TRAUMA**

An early problem in the development of my model was to clarify terminology in a new field where words have become laden with judgement or trivialised by over-use. For example, the words 'trauma' and 'traumatised' are now commonly used for any kind of minor disruption to life. At the same time trauma is increasingly being exiled into the territory of clinicians and psychiatrists as several writers warn (Herman, 1997; Smyth, 1998; Davis, 1999).

The terms are also used interchangeably to mean the event and the reaction to the event. It is often thus assumed that anyone involved in a traumatic event will be traumatised and thrown into crisis. An incident may be described as traumatic, critical, a trauma or a crisis because of its unexpected, horrific nature, but the state of trauma or crisis is what some people, but by no means all, will experience. The events in themselves are neutral; meaning is given through the relationship between the event and the person or group and is dependent on many variable factors – past experience, personality, current stresses, capacity to cope, resources for support. One event is usually made up of many parts of varying intensity, each experienced in many different combinations and ways by many different people. One isolated event rarely happens in one specific place at one specific time without a process being triggered.

Studies of the history of the trauma condition and its treatment (Herman, 1992; Black, 1996; van der Kolk, 1994; Teschedi & Calhoun, 1995; Davis, 1999; Papadopoulos, 2001; Baldwin et al, 2003) have helped me place current understandings and reactions to the word and subject in their social and political context. I learnt that the subject has always been controversial and appears to be tied up with the general difficulty of society with horror, their guilt and inability to prevent it or deal with people affected by it. The incidents and post-trauma reactions are a major inconvenience which society

therefore seeks to politicise for their own purposes, yet also deny and keep at a distance. Papadopoulos (2001) argues that the revival after the Vietnam War of the term trauma and the rise of the definition Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was initially caused by the wish to fuel the anti-war campaign and then to distance suffering veterans by giving them an exotic label to separate them from normal society. Similarly, the shell-shocked of WW1 were distanced as moral cowards and shamed or shot to absolve society of any responsibility towards the cause and consequences of their situation. From the first rail and industrial accidents of the early-19th century, trauma could be said to be a medico-legal construction arising from compensation claims with reactions and treatments needing precise definitions that can stand up in a court of law.

My extensive study of trauma research and literature has shown how it has been influenced by early thinkers on trauma, even Freud (1917, 1920) who had a major impact on the subject as a result of the First World War (Lifton, 1993). For example, the idea of a 'protective shield to the ego' (cf. The Void phase of my model) and the 'compulsion to repeat' elements of the incident (cf. Reminders of the Event phase) as a means of integration, and (cf. the Whirlpool), the impact of victimisation (van Velsen, 1997). I also discovered the influence of Lifton's Psycho-formative Theory, via the teaching of others. His theory includes the concepts of survivor guilt, the importance of choice in the recovery process and the natural movement of people towards re-integration of the traumatised self into a larger self, though some may choose a destructive path of 'false' integration to become the next perpetrators of violence (Lifton, 1968, 1993).

Trauma is multi-dimensional but many researchers only consider it in relation to the channel of existence that is their professional concern. The psycho-biologist, Bessel van der Kolk is an exception (Sykes Wylie, 2004). Janoff-Bulman (1992:164) suggests that there is a split between therapies which avoid or aim to minimise the trauma experience (behavioural, cognitive and pharmacological), and those which approach the trauma (insight, psychodynamic, art and hypnosis). This distinction reflects the alternation between avoidance and intrusion characteristic of the post-trauma process.

I have attempted to bring these splits together in this description. The **medical, biological** state of trauma is characterised by a person's inability to store the sensory images (S.A.M's – situationally accessible material) from their exposure to the event as verbally accessible memories (V.A.M's) because of physiological changes in the hormonal system (Brewin, 1992). This becomes intertwined with **psychological**



responses (**cognitive, emotional and behavioural**) with inability to integrate what has happened into existing systems of thinking (Horowitz, 1975, 1979; Foa et al, 1989, 1997; Janoff-Bulman, 1985; Ehlers & Clark, 2000). The adaptive responses are distressing and disruptive, often severe enough to overwhelm a person's capacity to cope, blocking their natural grieving process and pushing them into crisis. Central to these are the strong images imprinted on the brain during the incident (van der Kolk, 1994), also known as 'peri-traumatic hot-spots' (Holmes, 2001). They trigger the three characteristic groups of reaction: **re-experiencing** of reminders of the event, **hyper-arousal**, for example being always on alert for disaster, and **avoidance** of distressing reminders and reactions, (Turnbull, 1994). The predictable reactions to disaster are in constant inter-action with a person's subjective state and context so that reactions are also **socially and culturally constructed** (Quarentelli, 1998) and the underlying **religious and philosophical** beliefs of their context, as it is to do with the historical traumatic event. All of these interconnecting **biological, psychological and social trauma reactions** with all their varied **behavioural** manifestations, all then feed back into the system to produce further reactions, unless something is done to reverse the process (Turnbull, lecture, 1992). Some attempts have been made to construct integrative models of medical and some social aspects (Joseph et al, 1997; Yule 1999).

Trauma as a subject has been rediscovered and forgotten many times over the last few centuries, being given status in modern times through the needs of legislation and compensation (van der Kolk, 1991), first with the increase in industrial and railway accidents in Victorian times (Beveridge, 1996) to meet the needs of Vietnam veterans in the 1970's and again since the major UK disasters of the 1980's. The need for legal definitions, the need to establish causes and blame and tests to define degree of impact has all contributed in recent years to the medicalisation of trauma and a concentration on the impact on individuals, including victims of more everyday traumatic incidents such as road traffic accidents. The wider sociological issues are addressed in the highly praised studies of Erikson (1976, 1979), Lifton (1968, 1993) and Raphael (1986), based on the testimonies of survivors which 'identify a moral and humanitarian as well as social perspective'. (Hewitt, 1998:87) These issues are difficult to measure and research and have been overshadowed by medicalised models and the prediction and treatment of post-trauma clinical conditions. However, with the mass casualties of the attacks on America in 2000, interest in early interventions of a non-medical kind has are being revived (NIMH, 2002 ) even if some trauma professionals are loathe to accept that lay people and other non-specialist professionals have a role to play.

## THE TRAUMA PROCESS AS A BETRAYAL EXPERIENCE

My choice of the betrayal theme in my model was challenged in a CARPP enquiry group. I realised how strongly I was attached to it and this led to further reflection. As already stated, Hillman's concept of betrayal (Hillman, 1975) made everything fall into place so betrayal became central to my model. At the core lay an experience that betrayed my trust in myself and my world. Hillman's concept of betrayal helped me frame my everyday experiences but it also led to a deeper exploration at a spiritual level, connecting trauma with other profound issues that disaster was raising for me, such as forgiveness and reconciliation.

Hillman argued, from the perspective of a Jungian archetypal psychologist, that the theme of betrayal was a strong theme in major religions because:

*"...as trust has within in it the seed of betrayal, so betrayal has within it the seed of forgiveness" and thus "betrayal is the dark side of both, giving them both meaning, making them both possible. It is perhaps the human gate to such higher religious experiences as forgiveness and reconciliation" (p.79)*

Though difficult to grasp, I found the idea that betrayal and trust were different sides of the same coin were liberating, helping me to realise that trust was possible again without the need to be sure that the risk of betrayal was eliminated. Thus my model could contain a great deal of hope and possibility for growth from the experience.

The betrayal experience also fitted the view that traumatic incidents break the continuum of life. Hillman likened this pre-crisis time to childhood innocence before suffering and growing up impedes, the 'Garden of Eden' state of 'primal trust' where security and trust are based on the word of the father who is always ready to catch us when we fall. In relation to trauma, the protective nature of many parents towards their children means that many people live in the belief that if something awful were to happen, "THEY" will come to rescue them. "THEY" is the archetypal father/mother figure of childhood who could be relied on to make things better. When crisis strikes, these expectations are displaced on new authority figures such as the emergency and welfare services, doctors, clergy, employers, 'Fate' and God, especially if God is interpreted from an infantile viewpoint. (Scott Peck, 1990)

One reason for defining the trauma experience as one of betrayal, even if this is temporary, is the predictability of the pleas and statements made immediately after a tragedy. They are what I call 'gut responses', devoid of cognitive processing, delivered as if they come from the deepest parts of a person like the cry of Jesus on the cross, 'Father, father, why has thou forsaken me?'. Others include, "Why me/us?", "What have I/we done to deserve this?", "Where were 'they' when we needed them most?", "Why did 'they' let us down so badly?", "It's not fair". They give the lie to a person's underlying beliefs about what the world 'should be' and how it was found wanting in their hour of greatest need. The fact that this disaster has happened at all, and especially to them, is expressed as if it were a real betrayal by the world and 'God', even if the person claims not to believe in any god. Such perspectives placed on what has happened give the first indication of appraisals being made that will influence reactions and coping. They also herald the immediate post-trauma period, defined in my model as the 'void', where the person has to begin to understand this new world where things are no longer as they believed them to be.

Descriptions that survivors gave me of this period matched my own: "I feel I am going crazy", "It is as if my world is turned upside down", "... as if the rug has been pulled from under me", "I don't know who I am any more, all the signposts have gone!" The deepest parts of their being - physical, behavioural, emotional, spiritual and one's sense of worth and belonging are challenged, raising deep questions about life and death. A disaster sociologist has also defined 'modern' disaster as the arena of 'existential trust' or 'betrayal' by public institutions (Hewitt, 1995). The experience of many survivors was clearly an existential issue, reaching into the deepest fears of abandonment and loss of the innocence of the child who believes the father will also be there to rescue them, hence the cry of Jesus on the cross that can be so comforting to people in this place because it matches their feeling. As Hillman states (p. 69), it was not the expected acts of betrayal of Jesus by Judas and Peter but the third, by God, that shattered the core belief, the primal trust and led to the lament of Psalm 22:

*"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime and thou answerest not ..... there is none to help..."*

– Psalm 22

## **VICTIMS OR SURVIVORS?**

Part of the challenge from a CARPP member about the betrayal theme was that betrayal implied sufferers are victims, and this was not helpful or the only way people defined themselves. I was spurred into thinking more about this. I respected the important contribution of feminism in replacing the word victim with survivor in relation to rape and sexual abuse. The psychiatrist Summerfield (Summerfield, 2001) has also questioned 'invented' diagnoses such as post-trauma stress disorder because they legitimise, and thus produce, 'victim-hood', providing a certificate of impairment for disability pensions and compensation through a 'medico-legal pact'. I also remembered my meeting in Israel with a South African psychologist and her questioning of whether she was a victim, survivor, or both after being kidnapped and raped for three days (Friedman, 1993).

However, my personal experience included feeling victimised and being a victim, even of my own reactions at certain times. The model both described and stimulated my journey to become a survivor, though with occasional falls back into victim-hood. I have also been challenged by people angered at being called survivors rather than victims. They felt it was being used to deny their suffering for the comfort of society or to deny their further victimisation by bureaucracy or judicial systems, as commonly happens. Perhaps it is a matter, though probably a naïve hope, of neutralising the term victim to mean merely someone who was involved in an incident, though not necessarily a victim to it, and giving them the opportunity to define themselves in their own terms. My own experience tells me that it is possible to be a survivor in one circumstance and a complete victim of another at the same time. However long or short a time people feel a victim, the model is geared to helping people make choices about whether or not to regain power over the event and the aftermath to be a survivor. In the meantime, I use whichever term feels appropriate, and when in doubt revert to the cumbersome 'victim/survivor'.

## **THE SCAPEGOAT COMPLEX**

Enquiring into this subject was a high priority because it was so intertwined with the choices I made and my entry into and sojourn in the downward spiral of the 'whirlpool'. Other disaster specialists have identified it as an important dynamic. For example,

Raphael and Wilson (1993) list it as a particularly destructive consequence of disaster in organisations, alongside political manipulations, splitting and blaming.

Being cast into the role of scapegoat by my boss was the most terrifying experience of my post- 'Hungerford' experience and kept me stuck into the 'whirlpool'. I was conscious of what was happening having seen the same happens to others, but I was not in a good state and did not have the capacity to prevent it. Yet it was the depth of that experience that forced me to discover the creativity that redeemed the experience, formed the foundations of my work and challenged me to enquire into other major issues such as betrayal and forgiveness. Understanding the experience was part of my own recovery and an important resource because of the frequency with which I come across people in my work who have experienced similar situations.

My learning about the Scapegoat Complex has come from several sources:

1. Personal experiences – retrospective sense-making through therapy and reflection along with personal Action Inquiry in order to influence experiences as they are lived.
2. Discussions with others who have been cast as scapegoats
3. Consultancy and therapeutic work with clients also affected by this complex.
4. Participation in experiential workshops which have touched on this subject
5. Reading literature written from different perspectives such as the Jungian (through the writing of Perera, 1986), theological and social science (Douglas 1995).

In my search, I posed questions to elicit factual information, to investigate the mechanics of the process, its goals and purpose for society and individuals and to differentiate scape-goating from other forms of behaviour. To include the full text of my findings (Capewell, 2002b) at this point will be too disruptive, so I have selected key points. Whilst writing this piece (Dec/Jan 2001-2) a parallel process (one of several as I have written my thesis) occurred in the outside world. Not only did my first scapegoater die prematurely, the second wrote an e-mail acknowledging that he had treated me harshly and offered an apology. The difference this makes to me and what I do with the space in my psyche occupied for so long by the ghosts of these 'betrayers' will be an on-going personal enquiry.

I found that discovering the ancient historical and archetypal roots (Idries Shah, 1969; Joseph Campbell, 1973, 1990, BBC2, 1990a; Brewer, 1978; Perera, 1986) to my small but powerful individual manifestation of the complex, placed it in a much wider context. This was empowering and took myself outside of my personal experience and released me from the 'whirlpool'.

The concept of the scapegoat is ancient with its origins in early polytheistic cultures and pre-Hebraic herding cultures. The term scapegoat was first coined by Wm Tyndale (1494-1536) in his translation of the Bible to describe the role of Azazel in Leviticus Ch.16.10: 21-22. The ritual was developed as a community participation mystique<sup>1</sup> to relieve people and communities of feelings they could not handle and that disrupted their functioning (Douglas, 1995). It was comforting to discover the powerful status of the scape-goat. Originally, it was not killed (in contrast to the sacrificial goat that appeased the gods) as it was needed to live to carry the guilt and burden of sin. Above all, the ritual was a healing ritual where the different elements of the world and human nature could be atoned and brought together again into a whole. Through atonement with the transpersonal source, the collective is purified and the carrier of the burden can be relieved to roam outside the boundaries of the original community but freely in a state of 'privileged banishment' under the divine protection of the desert god (Maccoby, 1982).

Over time, the sacredness and community base of the ritual was lost, replacing it with isolation and vindictiveness of the weak or unwanted. It has become a social behaviour played out by individuals, specific groups, governments and organisations as a conscious strategy to manipulate their position (Douglas, 1995). Scape-goating is often met by counter-scape-goating, complicated further by modern media. Resolution and redress for the scapegoats have become the realm and rituals of psychologists, conflict mediators and in recent years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, courts of law, therapy techniques and group arts projects where rituals are enacted through dramatherapy or the creation of a symbolic object to take away distress or the disaster, as used after several Australian disasters (Wositzky, 1998; Beth Adey, Queensland, personal communication, 1992). Even fundraising after a disaster has elements of the ritual in that it serves to carry the guilt and shame of the on-lookers, as I discovered

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<sup>1</sup> A term coined by the anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Jung defined it as denoting '... a peculiar kind of psychological connection ... [in which] the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship.' Quoted in Perea (1986: 111)

from a taxi driver who had witnessed the Hillsborough disaster. The media have perhaps become the definers of scapegoats and are instrumental in satisfying public demand for having them, ensuring the victim-perpetrator-rescuer dynamic (Karpman, 1968) stays alive with each role rotating around different agencies, as seen in the Cleveland Child Abuse case (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989). Perhaps the worst manifestation of the distorted scapegoat complex occurs where the choice of scapegoat is backed by institutional or cultural discriminations such as race, gender, and creed. Once established it can turn neighbour against neighbour as in the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s in the Former Yugoslavian states and Rwanda in 1994.

My enquiries also exposed the role of **sin-eaters**, paid to sit by a corpse eating bread and salt to take their guilt away and save the deceased from hell. People like myself perform a similar role as consultants paid to take away some of the distress that employees, the organisation or the community cannot contain. This is acceptable if we are well supported and our role is understood by the organisation, but dangerous if they turn to vindictive scape-goating and blame us, the messengers and carriers of the distress (or 'sin'), for causing it, instead of shouldering their own responsibility. Examples of this have occurred with traumas involving child abuse. In spite of steps taken to protect ourselves where guilt and shame are intense, one in the story told in B3 and in the stories at the end of the thesis about work after the Omagh bomb.

My action inquiry into what I could do on a personal level to reverse the process or manage it to reduce its consequences, has given me practical ideas to offer others in a similar position. Part of my task is to inform, warn and offer insights and strategies as I work alongside communities and groups, though all of these tasks are exceptionally difficult as no one wants to believe they can be the perpetrators or victims of scape-goating. The dynamic appears to be set-off as people collectively and individually struggle to grasp the meaning and consequences of the disaster and restore certainty by finding some to blame. Once caught up in the complex, victims find it hard to detach from it and perceive alternatives are possible. If positions become polarised and entrenched, the situation is difficult to retrieve without intensive work, will and funding.

The fact that scape-goats are most likely to be made of victim/survivors and people bereaved by the disaster is often too bizarre an idea to be believed. This denial distances them from distress they cannot bear, or from 'victims' who become more powerful and demanding survivors than can be tolerated. Groups initially deemed to be victims worthy of pity can fall foul to public fickleness, such as the bereaved parents in

Dunblane who were blamed for not letting the community move on when they took up their gun law campaign (North, 2000). Herman (1992/97) points to its frequency in rape cases where judges blame the victim for 'asking for it' to happen. Compassion fatigue (Figley, 1996; Ayalon, 1998) is another trigger for scape-goating. I have observed in clients and myself that people who have felt obliged by their role to show extra caring (e.g. as a teacher, colleague or relative), after a safe lapse of time, stop 'having to be nice' and re-balance it with what can feel to the victim like blaming for having been inconvenient and demanding. Because of the demands on victims to be 'grateful', they are unlikely to talk about this except to fellow survivors or therapists.

Similarly whole communities have been 'blamed' for their disaster or its impact—Hungerford for not being caring enough of a member who didn't fit in; Liverpool for their contribution to the Heysel Stadium disaster; America following the September 11, 2001 attacks for its superiority and greed. Some people inflate this process, for example the Sun newspaper and some police officers decided that drunken football hooligans were the cause of the Hillsborough disaster, while the victims of the Marchioness ferry disaster on the River Thames in 1989 were assumed wrongly to be rich 'yuppies' having too good a time.

The victims themselves may also off-load unbearable reality and suffering onto others. Examples can be found amongst the bereaved of Omagh who displaced more anger than they deserved very vocally on to officials and friends. From my observations I noticed some common themes that may have been a pre-condition for this kind of blaming as a pre-cursor to scape-goating:

- the presence of unacknowledged personal guilt or unresolved issue in relation to the dead person (at the time of death and before)
- very painful emotions that overwhelmed their existing capacity to cope with them
- inability to make sense of what had happened
- an unknown perpetrator who cannot be brought to justice
- rapid deflection of anger towards others in greater quantities and with more emotion than expressed by other bereaved people
- inability to distinguish between justifiable and irrational cause for complaint.
- a rapid succession of events and repercussions perceived negatively
- loss of personal control for their lives



The transition from blaming to scape-goating appeared to occur when it became a public act and a predictable response to every opportunity to attack particular agencies or figures, with little regard for a rational assessment of the situation. The behaviour and stance taken also suggested that nothing could be done or said to change the perspective. Moreover, there was a feeling that the scape-goater's need for the victim to stay in that position was so strong that they would not be allowed to act differently, even if it solved the scape-goater's problem. Positions became more entrenched when the actions moved from an individual to a group. The situation became very complex if either the agency being scape-goated or on-lookers discomforted by the attacks, then responded by scape-goating the scape-goaters – a dynamic that could twist and turn in many directions and be self-perpetuating. (as in Story Box 2 and section E3).

The need to create a **scapegoat** who can do no right after a disaster seems to be as necessary as the need to create **heroes and heroines** who did, and can do, no wrong. It then means that others are absolved from providing help to either. Scape-goats must not dare to ask for help which their guilt deems them not to deserve, while heroes must show no distress and thus need no help. The heroes/heroines can also become the next scapegoats. There may be an intra-psychic reason for this as many are given this role when they do not feel they deserve it, knowing that their actions were part of their automatic stress response when increased adrenalin focused actions and physical strength. The unknown actions of others may have been just as deserving. The young, beautiful or strong are the most likely to be placed on a pedestal, as in the case of a teenaged girl chosen by the media as the heroic survivor of the Omagh bomb or the young boy given a Child of Courage award. They were fêted by Presidents and made special by the material rewards and opportunities heaped on them by the media, celebrities and politicians, creating a dynamic of jealousy around them, especially at school, because others felt ignored.

Victims of disaster who are in fact culpable provide the easiest candidates for scape-goating and attract extra blame for things they haven't done. This also of course happens to perpetrators themselves. The scape-goating of child murderers (such as those in the James Bulger case of 1993) is one example. Here the perpetrators are made to carry all of societies sins against children and are treated more harshly than many adult offenders (Scruton, 1997). Others include medical staff found guilty of unprofessional conduct, such as the consultants in the Cleveland Child Abuse cases of 1987 (Hawkins and Shohet, 2000), who have to carry blame that partly belongs to the organisations that created the systems that allowed mistakes to go unchecked. It must

also be remembered of course that some of these people were also responsible for previously scape-goating the messengers who 'blew the whistle' on their activities illustrating the point that the roles may be passed from one to another.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE GATHERING GROUND

The traditions of spiritual practice and non- westernised cultures have taught me a great deal about the human need to gather oneself after trauma and take stock of the new, strange world that has been suddenly emerged. Marian Partington, who has become a good friend and fellow enquirer, wrote about her own traumatic journey after the sudden disappearance of her sister, Lucy, to the discovery of her dismembered body twenty one years after her imprisonment and murder by serial killers, Fred and Rosemary West:

*"Mourning requires time and ritual. Pure grief is difficult to articulate. Like rage, its sound is beyond reason, and strangles words. It needs to wail, and sometimes it needs to bark. It can be misinterpreted as insanity."*

- Partington (2002)

These words well describe the need for time, peace and ritual to be provided in a 'gathering ground' and the insanity of some modern health service expectations that trauma be 'cured' in six one hour sessions of treatment.

I first heard the term '*gathering ground*' in 1992 during my training with Barbara Somers, Director of the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology in London (the tapes of the courses appear in Somers et al, 2002). It had a comforting sound that did not imply the 'shoulds and oughts' in the exhortations of people from many traditions, including alternative ones, of how you should be or cope after a distressing event. It required a stillness to just be, and from the being, more grounded forward movement could arise. It thus became my template for managing the void and a template that meant it could take many forms.

Gathering grounds can be created by the person themselves, but more often people need help to preserve a safe place and boundaries of various kinds. Creating such boundaries, were, I realised, also helpful to people when old familiar boundaries have been smashed by disaster and when they could not physically retreat from the world.

They give permission and preserve a time for nourishment and reflection, free from other stress, before the new boundaries can be recreated. Barbara Somers likens such places to the mythical Epidaurus, the place of healing and sanctuary of people in trouble. Here sleep was induced and dreamers left to dream near running water. On waking, the priest-healer listened to their experience of the dream and helped them enter their inner landscape and dialogue with the figures they met there so that they came back into the world to seek their dream and greater wholeness. (Somers et al, 2002: 166). A similar concept is promoted by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) who discovered that the struggle to endure and accept what is inevitable and cannot now be changed is what brings about growth. It required an ability to '*endure a significant period of rumination*' and '*search for primary control, a long time of not finding ways to manage or understand the event*'.

My task as a facilitator of the process is to translate such ideals into practical methods acceptable to all kinds of people and organisation, more important because I most often work in the early post-disaster period (the 'Void' of my model). I look for culturally appropriate means to create safe structures in which creative spaces can be opened up, the space and time needed to 'gather' resources, identifying feelings and sense-making before decisions about future actions are taken. In organisations, they make take the form of team meetings, rituals or types of debriefing, and the management of an individuals return to work, work load, or therapeutic support. In schools, it can be achieved by assemblies, class meetings, creative class activities and rituals. Sending people home or closing schools without any secure framework for people to be held together does not provide the safety vulnerable situations require. Managers especially need to take even a few minutes to gather themselves so that there is thinking between their immediate reactions and responses that may create further stress and problems.

In recent times, one of the best examples of how to provide a 'gathering ground' after a prolonged traumatic experience was the help given to the Lebanese hostages, Terry Waite, John McCarthy and their families. The protective and informed care of the RAF Wroughton team 'held that space' for them in the early days of readjustment away from the normal pressures of life. The subsequent time spent by Terry Waite at Trinity Hall, Cambridge and McCarthy in France gave them valuable breathing space before decisions about their post-trauma lives had to be taken.

Most survivors of trauma, however, do not have the luxury of such opportunities, either through economic necessity or cultural pressures. As Professor Wm. Yule said in a

BBC2 documentary, *'Disaster Never Ends...'* (BBC2, 1990b), a get-better-by or grieve-by date of six weeks after the trauma is a common experience, and a year if you are

lucky. Even if these strictures are not imposed by others, they are often self-imposed because the distress is too much to bear. Much of my practice is therefore involved in offering different ways of thinking that give people permission to take time for gathering themselves and ensure that onlookers do not stop them. For example, I find it important to emphasise that even though it is a time of stillness, it is not inactive and needs real participation by the individual. Attention to inner processes, behaviours, interactions and the external environment is important. Even sleep can be active if it involves the watching for dreams and working with them gently using them for self-help as described, for example, by Shohet (1985). Gentle physical action and occupation which supports and nourishes the body and mind is also essential, especially simple tasks like cleaning, knitting, chopping wood, and gardening that allows reflection and structure, along with basic self-help tasks that help the exploration of their new territory without any pressure to make decisions or seek solutions.

## THE CONCEPT OF CHOICE

My model is unlike most others in that it shows a divergence in the routes that can be taken rather than implying every stage has to be passed through. However, choice is inherent in the approach of Judith Herman, who has been an inspiration to many of us uncomfortable with directive medical models of working with people. She wrote:

*"The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure. Many benevolent and well-intentioned attempts to assist the survivor founder because this fundamental principle is not observed...Caregivers schooled in a medical model of treatment often have difficulty grasping this fundamental principle and putting it into practice."*

- Herman, 1997:133

I was in no doubt that I had to be in charge of my own recovery – even if it meant I made mistakes. Empowerment of course means taking responsibility for one's choices as well as having the right to choose. However, the emphasis on choice in my model

was quite confronting at times, especially finding it hard to believe that there were other ways I could have reacted to the external events compounding and creating my stress. I had not chosen the way my bosses behaved and I asked, "Why would I have chosen such a miserable path?" Similar thoughts arose again after my daughter's death. What choice, I wondered, do people who suffer mass horror have? I found similar objections from others who tried to apply my model to extreme situations. Others objecting to this idea tended to be people with a firm belief that behaviour was determined by past situations and events, or people overwhelmed by hopelessness about the social situations of their clients. Teachers especially wanted to know how children with a long history of abuse or social deprivation had any choice in the matter.

While of course all kinds of external factors have an influence and may influence the range of choices possible, there is plenty of evidence around that this is not the whole story. Victor Frankl (Frankl, 1959) observed in survivors of the Holocaust, that it was the different meanings people gave to the same experience that made the difference between survival and death. Similarly, children brought up in the same family or people exposed to similar traumatic events also deal with their experiences differently. Some transcend it, others wither. Moreover, if there were no choice, then there would be no hope of change. Lifton, in the second of his Ten Principles of Psychoformative Theory (1968, 1988, 1993) noted the dialectical nature of survival and the alternatives where survivors have to stay locked in numbing or use survival for insight and growth. As much as we all might like a magic wand or someone to make things better for us, in the end we can only discover our choice and that there are always alternatives for ourselves. We need to learn from Oscar Wilde:

*"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."*

It is often only when this insight is gained that people may consider external support to find new strategies (Caplan, 1964)

Discovering Adlerian Individual Psychology in 1994 provided the theoretical framing I required for my model. Adler's belief that behaviour is chosen, not caused was empowering as it made choice and change possible. Choices in reactions to an event will be made consciously or subconsciously according to the person's inner goals and needs, depending on the awareness and social skills they possess. In one notable

example, the artist, Stanley Spencer, wrote about the choice that came to him when contemplating the horror of his experiences in the First World War:

*"During the war when I contemplated the horror of my life and the lives of those with me, I felt the only way to end the ghastly experience would be if everyone suddenly decided to indulge in every degree and form of sexual love."*

- Robinson, 1991: 11

Though there is some evidence that this choice influenced his behaviour towards his wife, he mainly acted it out through his paintings, for example 'Beatitudes of Love'. He also wrote that:

*"The Burghclere Memorial redeemed my experience from what it was; namely something alien to me. By this means I recover my lost self"*

The idea of choice can also be challenging to those who believe that progress must be linear and smooth. The idea that certain interventions can be given like a pill and expected to have the desired effect does not allow for the self-determining nature of human beings. People often prefer to continue using methods of coping that are not good for their long-term health, bearing in mind that what is deemed healthy is laden with many cultural and social expectations. As a helper, all I can do is give the best possible information, support and alternatives to help the person increase their range of resources and offer support to the people around them, from families to politicians to help make the environment for recovery healthier. I have to respect the fact that people have their own paths to make and follow and, as I have discovered, often growth is found in the cul-de-sacs and pits of wrong choices.

It was of course not enough to mention the word choice. In response to feedback, I needed to spell out the different routes and consequences, especially on behaviour more specifically. I sought to clarify the difference between primary emotions, their indirect, unhealthy though understandable expressions found in the 'whirlpool', and their more positive transformations as adjustment and integration is achieved. I used my first-person enquiry, therapy and reading to discover how different beliefs could influence thoughts and how these could influence emotional reactions and produce different behaviours. For example, a belief that states 'the world should not be like this!' can produce intense anger that can be turned in to bitterness, revenge and harmful

actions, or it can be turned more usefully into action to make necessary changes or creative expression. Devastating results can occur if the choices include coping methods, such as abuse of alcohol, that lead to other unhelpful choices as the story in Story Box 8 shows.

The root emotions and direct expressions of deep sorrow and loss, fear and anger are distorted according to Hillman's analysis of betrayal (1975) into the bitterness, cynicism, raging, paranoia and loss of trust of self and others, with associated behaviours displacing unbearable emotions against or onto others or against self. This can then be linked to behaviour following on from the displacement or avoidance of certain emotions, for example alcohol abuse as a means of avoiding intense sorrow, domestic violence as a displacement for anger, and panic attacks as a way of curtailing unmanageable feelings.

Understanding the role of the disaster in such behaviour is important for anyone with a duty of care for victims, since behaviour is often the gateway to them becoming involved, as in the case of the policeman in the story in Box 8 below. They have no right to be the therapist, but they do have a right to deal with behaviours that affect them, the job or school performance, and it is more helpful if they do this in a supportive way that encourages self-realisation and learning.

### **STORY BOX 8**

#### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF DEGENERATIVE CHOICES**

*'I saw every dead body in the disaster. I was next to PC... (his friend and colleague) when he was shot dead. I got home at the end of his day, really shell-shocked. Can you believe, my flat-mate (a fellow police officer) just turned to me and told me I'd got to move out. I just went right into myself and consoled myself with drink. I got the offer of a half hour chat from my boss, but nothing really helpful. Drink caused my road accident on duty, they let me off because of the disaster, but I wish they'd given me some help instead. I couldn't continue like this so I resigned. Then I did a really stupid thing. I'd been drinking and I was short of money so I took it in my head to rob a bank. So I put a cucumber in a bag and held this poor girl up at 'gun-point'. I was surprised at the length of my sentence – I got 6 years. The judge said he realised I'd been badly traumatised, but that it was, after all, two and a half years ago.'*

- Letter, used with permission, from HMP ....., 1990.

Adlerian literature has been particularly helpful in discovering how the same emotion can be distorted into different behaviours according to the dominant psychological goals of the person – to gain attention, power, revenge, and withdrawal, or to make a useful contribution (Lew, 1990, Bettner & Lew, 1990; Scarlapetti, 2003). Intense sadness can thus be converted into self-pity, emotional wallowing, morbid grief or depression, or it can be transformed by direct expression of the emotion physically (tears, exercise, meditation), creative activities (art, music), rituals and remembrance and sharing it with others so that it becomes useful action or learning for the self and then others. Anger can be turned into revenge, violence and, if turned inwards, depression, or it can be expressed directly and safely and used to fuel useful action such as campaigning or social action.

I have observed, backing the observations of others (Rose, 2002), that shame and guilt are nearly always present in clients who seem stuck in their trauma, fixed in destructive thoughts and feelings and resisting all alternative views. If they haven't already made a rapid descent into the 'whirlpool' with consequences for relationships and work, dealing with these issues is the priority before any other work can be done. Assertions from on-lookers that there is no logical reason to feel guilt or shame makes many people feel worse. I have found it necessary first to acknowledge the reality of feelings of guilt before doing a reality check to distinguish real guilt (requiring remorse and reparation) from the guilt that comes with wanting to have done the impossible (requiring an acknowledgement of the depth of the loss and adjustments in core beliefs about self image).

Paradoxically, as much as I believe in the concept of choice in so far as it is about taking full responsibility for one's actions and life, I have experienced the surrendering of choice as a choice I can make. At several phases of the model, notably in the darker moments and as I work towards moving beyond my experiences and occasionally myself, I have brief glimpses that choice is taken from us, as Barbara Somers writes:

*"...the greatest freedom in life is to do willingly that which I must. ....One doesn't have to choose, one stands and is chosen through."*

- Somers et al, 2002



## **SOCIAL ACTION, JUSTICE, CAMPAIGNING AND POLITICS**

These are all major issues that can create trauma, block and promote recovery and pervade every aspect of the trauma journey. I have become interested in them partly because they are part of the fabric of any disaster and its aftermath and also because my work has taken me into areas of conflict, from Northern Ireland, to Israel, Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Croatia during the Balkan war. I have also come into contact with people such as my Israeli colleagues who are always working their own highly political context and often invited into others, for example by the Imam of Zagreb to work with all sides in the Balkan conflict. Further exposure has come from my association with the University of York's Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit and Edge Hill's Centre for Studies in Crime and Social Justice. The latter has highlighted the reality of issues involving long drawn out legal proceedings such as the Hillsborough Inquiry (Scruton, 2000; Edge Hill, CSCSJ Disaster Archive [www.edgehill.ac.uk/cscsj](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/cscsj)) and the Dunblane 'Snowdrop campaign' (North, 2000) to change the gun laws.

I shall leave a fuller discussion of these issues for another place and time, but here I just want to note my reason for my interest. These are issues that are often ignored with the increasing focus on the individual psychological experience of trauma. I regard these issues as important in their influence on the processing of traumatic experiences, in the choices that people can make and the level of change needed by wider social and political systems for individual recovery to occur. Practitioners can also be accused by politicians and people on all sides of a conflict for using methods that, for example, defuse anger, especially when it is this anger that may turn people into the next generation of fighters. There is a fear that therapeutic practice can be misused to control people and this had real implications in places like Northern Ireland where most psychologists and psychiatrists were from the dominant Protestant tradition. My Israeli colleagues have been criticised for working with Jewish communities in the Occupied Territories to prepare them for their potential re-location, and at one time they were criticised for helping to alleviate the trauma of children and thereby 'make it permissible for them to be traumatised as it is treatable', (Ayalon, personal communications).

Campaigning by victims and survivors as a reaction to and an integral part of coping with trauma and grief has also been largely ignored, yet is component of most major disasters and an increasing part of other deaths, especially where negligence is suspected as in the case of the child deaths at Bristol and organ retention controversy

there and at other UK Hospitals. Such campaigns cause polarisations in attitudes towards victims, delayed and cumulative reactions due to prolonged legal, medical Inquiries and intense and extensive media involvement. Our own Newbury Community Epidemiological Study and campaign (Capewell, 1998c) to gain recognition for the high incidence of deaths of young adults from leukaemia taught me about issues and aspects of campaigning and how it intertwined with the grieving process that I would otherwise not have appreciated so fully. In particular it showed me the type of support and encouragement needed according to which phase of the trauma cycle someone is in and to challenge those who, instead of offering loving support and challenge, make blanket accusations against campaigning survivors of the kind that Dunblane campaigners endured (North, 2000).

## THE QUESTION OF FORGIVENESS

Developing my model has meant tackling major life issues and questions that are key themes in religion and philosophy. Forgiveness is one such issue. My investigations continue and I am again aware of how I struggle with the feeling that my own experiences are nothing compared to the stories of many people around the world who face these issues on a massive scale. Viewing the 'Forgiveness' exhibition in London, ([www.theforgivenessproject.com](http://www.theforgivenessproject.com)), with stories of the struggles to forgive from around the world, including my friend Marian Partington's story, was a humbling experience. However, my story can perhaps relate more easily to the everyday experiences of many people and I settle my hesitation by realising that if we can learn how to do the everyday forgiving, then there may be less need for forgiveness on a dramatic scale.

In November 1987, Gordon Wilson came to prominence as the man who 'forgave' the Enniskillen IRA bombers, to the wonder of some and consternation of many. His daughter had just been killed and he was injured. I often reflected on this and wondered how he could do this so soon, when I was struggling so much to forgive my bosses for far less significant acts. Later, through my work in Northern Ireland, I met people close to Gordon and learnt that what he actually said was "I bear no ill will, I bear no grudge. Dirty sort of talk is not going to bring her back". As someone who knows the family said, *"This was not forgiveness, but, to use a religious word, grace"*. *The media shorthand, "Gordon Wilson, the man who forgave his daughter's killers", created a straitjacket that was hard for him to shake off so he put his high profile to the best advantage he could do defeat the bombers through peace."* The concept of

forgiveness carries many subtleties and is a state of mind that goes well beyond the simple saying of the words, 'I forgive you'. People with the religious convictions of Gordon Wilson would actually believe that only God can forgive.

I was heartened by the realisations made from reading James Hillman's work that forgiveness is not about forgetting or denying that a wrong has been done. My feelings for revenge against my bosses had not abated, but I was beginning to realise its self-destructive nature and that forgiveness was not just some altruistic, selfless act. It was necessary for good health on all sides. Hillman's definition was encouraging:

*"Forgiving is not forgetting, but a remembrance of wrong transformed into a wider context."*

or, in the words of Carl Jung:

*"The salt of bitterness is transformed into the salt of wisdom."*

- Hillman, 1975: 79

The wider context for me was finding the learning for myself behind the experience of betrayal, and then encouraging others to do the same. It so often felt like the betrayed person had to do all the work of forgiveness, so it was a relief to read Hillman's argument that forgiveness also needs the betrayer to recognise, remember and carry the wrong and their guilt too. I have heard others argue that forgiveness in its purest form is given without condition or even any involvement from the perpetrator, but Hillman's involvement of the betrayer in the process made it possible for me to start the process and overcome the intense bitterness I felt. Apology had also to be made real with reparation and restoration through acts for the common good that redeemed the wrong-doing and possibly the wrong-doer.

My friendship with Marian Partington has added considerably to my learning, especially the courage needed to undertake the journey to forgive, dealing both with inner struggles and reactions of those who cannot understand the aspiration to forgive. Marian says of the journey she chose to take:

*"I had a deep need to reclaim Lucy's truth [she was a 'refined, poetic girl'] from the dark mangling by the Wests and the media. The gap I needed to cross in order to be able to comprehend and forgive was vast."*

- Partington (2002)

My exploration of forgiveness has been a serendipitous process of keeping the issues open in my mind so that I pay extra attention to information, media programmes and stories that come my way. While I was absorbed by the subject of forgiveness while writing my first draft of this thesis, some old copies of 'Changes' Journal were sent to me unexpectedly. One Journal included the article by Ben Fuchs (Fuchs, 1997) with his tough challenge about a degenerative motivator for forgiveness. Fuchs makes the distinction between forgiveness as a state, that of being in relation to an event, rather than forgiveness as a verb, an act that can be used as a form of power game to gain moral superiority over the perpetrator and does not lead to healing. The delicate task of forgiveness requires the other not to be lowered or put down by being righteous. It is still a reaction, the other side of victim-hood and such patterns need to be given up for true reconciliation with what has happened.

Forgiveness thus viewed is challenging, since all kinds of well used survival strategies have to be given up if forgiveness is not to be used as a subtle, acceptable form of revenge. Fuchs believes that forgiveness is an individual, personal journey which cannot be done on the behalf of anyone else. He suggests that certain factors will help the process along:

- a willingness to give up secondary gains such as the power of feeling righteous
- placing betrayal in a wider context as described in Hillman's definition above
- understanding our own capacity to betray, thus leading to compassion for our own human nature and thus also to compassion for our betrayers. Compassion allows healing.
- a willingness to use betrayal as a teacher, a valuable part of our development whereby we move from primal trust to understanding that real trust can only occur where there is a risk of betrayal, even from those closest to us.

As stated earlier in the section named 'Moving Beyond the Disaster Frame' in the description of the model, this is a stage that not many people reach, and not all ever aspire to reach. It is the path chosen by those who have perhaps nothing to lose from taking the risks involved or by those with the vision and courage to explore dimensions beyond their current knowing. They can no longer be satisfied with just getting by or finding the comfortable normality that most of us choose that is not much different from their pre-trauma lives.

## **ADJUSTMENT, RECOVERY AND GETTING BETTER – What do these words really mean?**

Some victims have reacted strongly to terms such as recovery, fearing it colludes with society's need to move them on and conveniently forget the impact. The idea that it is possible to recover from the loss of a child, for example, is offensive to some. Getting over the unhelpful reactions is confused with getting over the loss. The question needs to be asked, 'Getting better for whom, for what and by whose criteria?' - what is better for society or an employer may not be better for the person.

The term 'adjustment' is more acceptable to many. It can be done at different levels and in different ways. I have observed many levels of adjustment from 'just getting by', to practical re-stabilisation without major life or belief changes, through to major shifts in life-style and perspectives and transformations discussed in the next section. In the workplace traumatic incidents I respond to, all but a few adjust quickly with the speedy application of timely, skilled assistance backed by supportive management and friends. For most adjustment means a healthy return to full performance at work, managers may have to be persuaded that for some the optimum outcome is to resign even though reactions have been defused, as illustrated in Story Box 9 below:

### **STORY BOX 9**

#### **RECOVERY: WHOSE CRITERIA?**

*A young manager arrived at work only to have guns thrust in her face by three men who were holding the night cleaners hostage. She left for her holiday abroad the next day but she soon broke down when a noise reactivated her trauma. She stayed in the hotel for the rest of her holiday - just the sight of the company logo, even in a different place, reactivated intense fear. On her return home, she could not socialise or go out, her income was under threat and she could not bear to go near her workplace or another branch. At first she seemed very stuck and there was little progress until we adapted my methods to use metaphor that made her laugh a lot. Her face lightened as she finally managed to tell her story without the strong reactions. Her distress began to decrease rapidly after several sessions and homework. I helped her rehearse in her mind, and later in reality, her return to the store. After a month, she was able to find the courage to re-enter her work-place, the scene of her trauma. Even with the delay in receiving support, she still only took 4 weeks to move from immobilising fear and avoidance to reach what had seemed an impossible goal – to re-enter the store. She still resigned, but only because she had, for the first time since leaving school, realised there was another life beyond this company'*

- Taken from my records, 2001

Recovery and adjustment is not guaranteed and the journey to achieving them long-term may be difficult, but the knowledge that alternatives and choice are available provides a good base from which the territory of healthy coping can be negotiated – with more joy and hope than the territories experienced before. There are often many set-backs, as I am sure the young woman above may still discover, but the possibility can at least be believed. The elements needed to promote healthy coping and healing include: finding one's power, especially through gaining a platform for one's voice to be heard, participation with others, a purpose beyond oneself as well as for oneself, resourcefulness and a social role. In reality it may also of course bring more trauma and attacks from others who are threatened by the voices of survivors, especially when powerful forces of the state and legal systems become involved as the Dunblane parents found (North, 2000).

In many therapeutic settings it may only be possible to build healthy coping, but this creates the foundations for the next stage of transformation. A psychologist, Mary Harvey, in her thesis *'An Ecological View of Psychological Trauma'* cited by Herman (1997) has defined 7 criteria for the resolution of trauma, experienced not in the simple linear order suggested by this list but in many circles and spirals of interconnectedness:

- The physiological symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder have been brought within manageable limits
- The person can bear the feelings associated with traumatic memories
- The person has authority over their memories and can elect to remember or not
- The memory of the traumatic event is a coherent narrative, linked with feeling
- The person's damaged self-esteem has been restored
- The person's important relationships have been re-established
- The person has reconstructed a coherent system of meaning and belief that encompasses the story of the trauma

## **BEYOND THE TRAUMA: GROWTH, INTEGRATION, TRANSFORMATION, TRANSCENDENCE?**

All of these words are used to describe what happens when a person feels they have stepped out of the control of the original disaster and its repercussions – it goes beyond adjustment, recovery from reactions and getting better. I wanted to investigate this last phase, the ultimate goal of my model, for personal reasons so I should have a better sense of what I was striving for. I often felt my account of this phase and the

hope it gives sounded hollow. I could sense growth and integration in my journey from crisis, even some transformation, but I was less sure about the higher goals of transcendence. This has been an exploration through experiential workshops and retreats, learning from other people on this path and reading a variety of texts which continues, and I suspect has no end. Such words can be meaningless at the start of the journey, when just getting by seems impossible, and it may be that they have no real meaning until the person has attained these conditions

My explorations fall into two categories: first, the views of trauma psychologists and psychiatrists and second, the views of people expressing a more creative and spiritual view of life beyond trauma. There is of course some over-lap as not all psychologists are caught in purely scientific models of growth, especially those who gain their expertise from the field, for example Lifton (1968), Kai Erikson (1976/79) and Herman (1992). However, it generally falls to literature, philosophy, religion and the writings of therapeutic traditions such as Jungian psycho-analysis to deal more fully with such issues, though the psychologists may provide the techniques that release the symptoms that might forestall the possibility for growth.

### **The views of trauma psychologists**

The early disaster workers saw the goal of survival as the re-integration of the traumatised self into the whole self (Lifton, 1968, 1983). This could be taken on many levels, such as re-creating a continuous life narrative, to re-appraising belief systems to make room for the new reality or finding new ways to express emotion or behaviour. Judith Herman (1997) writes of the importance of finding a 'survivor mission' for a significant number of survivors of abuse who recognise the political or religious dimension in their suffering. By making it a gift to others, they transcend it. Some specialists emphasised resilience, coping and salutogenic approaches (Lazarus, 1977, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ayalon, 1983, 1988; Lahad, 1993, C.S.P.C. volumes 1-5, 1988- 2003, Rosenfeld et al, in press).

However, many modern treatments concentrate on fast symptom reduction and research focuses on predicting and treating more extreme clinical expressions of post-trauma reaction, such as PTSD, and developing predictive tools (Brewin et al, 2002) since these are the areas of medical and legal concern. The emphasis on the negative aspects of traumatic experiences has led to a re-balancing with studies of post-trauma growth (Teschedi & Calhoun, 1995; Linley & Joseph, 2002). One of the newest trauma centres, in Northern Ireland, is called the Centre for Trauma and Transformation, at the

insistence of the Trustees, one of whom, the Duchess of Abercorn, was trained by Somers & Gordon-Brown (2002) at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology. On asking what was meant by 'Transformation', the Director replied, 'Applied to conflict we mean changing how we manage anger, difference etc from destructive, primal approaches to more constructive approaches. It is also about hope and choosing' (The Director, personal communication)

One reason for looking in more detail at the work on post-trauma growth was my concern about press reports that implied that anyone who did not grow after a traumatic event had failed in some way or that professionals were exaggerating the distress of victims. Growth was also spoken about as if it was a simplistic process and everyone was capable of growth, though it was exceptional characters such as Nelson Mandela that were cited as proof of the assertions. Another reason for my interest was my question mark over whether anything more than re-appraisal and symptom change could result from relatively brief clinical procedures without deeper-level therapy or spiritual practice of some kind.

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) have researched growth in their clients over some years. They, like Judith Herman (1997), deal with more accessible forms of growth such as social action and writing about experiences. Tedeschi and Calhoun conclude that higher levels of transformation can only develop when changes occur in the foundational belief system guiding a person's life and probably require work at a deeper experiential level. Even the worst traumas, they believe, can result in transformation, but the process is 'long and perhaps with no end'. I suspect the worst traumas are actually more likely to result in the deepest transformations. Where most has been lost, there is less to lose and more to gain from radical change.

Supportive others may be helpful in this journey, but eventually, one's own peace must be made with the event. This peace involves giving up many things: old assumptions; hopes; belief systems; and, in particular, notions of invulnerability and personal power, and harsh judgements of self and others. Paradoxically a new sense of power must be nurtured by the determination to extract the good from living and to actively contribute to it. Confronting spiritual issues is nearly always an aspect of this process of transformation, and comfort has been found by many in decisions to accept and serve. Transformation cannot be forced and the lessons may have to be learned more profoundly again and again following subsequent cycles of experience.



Tedeschi and Calhoun do an admirable job in reversing the view of Charles Dickens, traumatised in a rail crash, that catastrophe must inevitably lead to the 'worst of times'. They recognise, however, that great sensitivity to the readiness of the person is needed before the concept of growth and transformation after trauma can even begin to be contemplated. This far, their beliefs matched mine but one aspect of their work concerns me, namely their assumption that a systematic assessment needs to be made of 'growth' and how it happens. They have developed research tools to test whether or not growth has occurred. They devote a chapter to examining many important issues around the difficulty of measuring variables which are hard to measure and are clearly committed to qualitative research and conducting research in a humane manner. In the end however, they are still firmly attached to scientific paradigms reflecting the interests of the researchers rather than the researched. Their Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory requires participants to place their self-assessed degree of change for each item on a scale. This and similar tests, such as Park's Scale Related Growth Scale (quoted in Tedeschi, 1995) and the 'Changes in Outlook' measure used by Joseph following the 1988 Jupiter cruise ship sinking (Joseph et al., 1997) reduce all levels of change from small behaviour changes to major transformations to mere numbers and it hurts me to think how this diminishes the struggles, the beauty and magnitude of what some people experience. It serves once more to deny people their voice. I am also concerned that from attempts to discover what helps people grow, future treatments will be devised that are too prescriptive and do not foster the person's own creativity.

I believe that transformation is a process drawing from many channels of being and knowing which cannot be done unto others. The kind of research that tries to dissect it, box it and possibly order and control it fails to appreciate the wholeness of the transformation experience that takes us beyond ourselves into a realm that is more universal, beyond space and time. I believe that the testimonies of real people expressed through the creative arts and literature, ancient and modern, fact and fiction will continue to provide the best evidence of transformation after trauma. The emergent, creative future looking nature of action research must have a place here and, though not designated as action research, the work of Gal and Ayalon with the survivors of the Ma'alot terrorist attack in Israel in 1974 has many of its core elements (Gal et al, 1996). They were concerned with encouraging survivors to speak with their own voices and to produce their own assessments of how they coped and what they wanted to achieve. They posed questions to stimulate responses and creative solutions

rather than defining what coping should be and measuring whether it had been achieved.

I shall now turn to perspectives that deal with growth at a deeper level beyond coping and recovery for oneself.

### **Holistic perspectives on transformation and transcendence**

The words transformation and transcendence appear with greater frequency in this type of literature. Poetry, art and metaphor may be a more appropriate language for exploring higher levels of growth without destroying the experience by trying to describe and analyse it in terms other than itself. Transformation inhabits the world that Samuels terms the imaginal, the in-between state where images take the place of language (Rowan 1993), and what Hillman (Hillman, 1990) links with the place of soul-making full of images and myths, where the functions that humans construct are more important than literal truth. As Joseph Campbell wrote (1990):

*"Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human manifestation..."*

Action research can validate these non-literal truths and can work with metaphor and symbol, allowing what Rowan (Rowan, 1993) suggests is needed, exploration and action but abandoning control. Jung expressed it thus:

*"The art of letting things happen, action through non-action, letting go of oneself, as taught by Meister Eckhart, became for me the key opening the door to the way. We must be able to let things happen in the psyche. For us, this is an art of which few people know anything. Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, negating, and never leaving the simple growth of the psychic processes in peace."*

- Jung, 1968 quoted in Rowan 1993

Holistic perspectives are also more likely to tolerate and even welcome, the slips back into the 'whirlpool' of despair, from which I believe well-grounded growth may come. Too often scientific trauma researchers dismiss such slips as 'harmful' and proof of that a method does not work. From reading real-life stories, the path to integration and transcendence is extremely hard with many pitfalls. Growth comes from facing these. I can think of times in my own journey where I thought I had 'recovered' or integrated my

experience, only to be knocked back and made to realise there was a lot more to be done. It is a life-time process that 'just is how it is', and while others may see your growth, the lived experience may be feel like decline. June Raymond, a Catholic nun and member of the Association of Creation Spirituality, writes:

*"The task of our lives is to transform the material into the spiritual. [Mistakes are part of that as they plunge us] into the shadow without which there can be no transformation. The transforming power is love... ... The transformation goes on whether or not in our human terms we 'get it right'. .... I learnt from Julian of Norwich that every negative is part of an organic process which is life-giving. It is not something that went wrong. Negative and positive are both part of transformation, of creation."*

- Raymond, 2001: 145

The writing of the great spiritual leader, The Dalai Llama (1998) illustrates an element of transcendence by his ability to rise above the trauma of his people to see that:

*"... every phenomena has different aspects', describing how the tragedy of Tibet as also brought great learning, new contacts and opportunities as well as the sweeping away of out-dated rigid formalities."*

- The Dalai Lama, 1998

He also uses the stories of the 4th century Desert Fathers to emphasise that suffering and hardship alone are not enough to bring wisdom:

*"What is also needed is a shift in perspective, to view things from a different vantage point."*

Herman (Herman, 1997) and Joanna Macy (Macy, 1991).both suggest the use of stories of transcendence as a method of reaching transcendence. Herman quotes the experience of Natan Sharansky, a prisoner of conscience:

*"Back in Lefortovo [prison], Socrates and Don Quixote, Ulysses and Gargantua, Oedipus and Hamlet, had rushed to my aid. I felt a spiritual bond ...they accompanied me through prison cells and camps... The mystical feeling of interconnection of human souls... was one of the weapons we had to oppose the world of evil."*

- 'Fear No Evil', Random Books, 1988

This is similar to Macy's notion of the Ball of Merit, the collection of stories of the great heroes and heroines of history, from which inspiration and endurance can be drawn.

Jung outlines the conditions he observed in clients 'who, quietly and unconsciously grew beyond themselves' most conducive to transformation in his commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower' (Wilhelm, 1962):

*"... I saw that their fates had something in common. Whether arising from without or within, the new things come ... from a dark field of possibilities; they accepted it and developed further by means of it. But it was never something that came exclusively from within or without. If it came from outside the individual, it became an inner experience; if it comes from within, it was changed to an outer event. But in no case was it conjured into existence through purpose and conscious willing, but rather seemed to flow out of the stream of time"*

Hillman talks of the point of initiation as the movement from a state of child-like primal trust into the reality of adulthood with all its tragedy and joy. He sees crisis as the means of breakthrough into another level of consciousness where the true purpose of the betrayal experience – that trust and forgiveness cannot be real unless there is the possibility of betrayal and not being rescued (Hillman, 1975). This interpretation resonated with my Hungerford experience where I had to learn that trust and betrayal were two sides of the same coin.

Some of these concepts are not easily grasped by everyone, so I have also sought simpler ones that can be understood by most people. Three quotations encapsulate transcendence in accessible terms. First, the novelist, Reynold Price (1994), calls it:

*"the next viable you – a stripped down whole other clear-eyed person"*

Second, Ben Okri captured the essence in 'The Awakening Age':

*"When perceptions are changed there's much to gain  
A flowering of truth instead of pain"*

and third, Maya Angelou:

*"History, despite its wrenching pain,  
Cannot be unlived but, if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again."*

### **My own current perspective**

My own view is that the trauma journey is a complex mix of reactions, responses and repercussions. We can make choices about what we do and the path taken, but it is a dynamic process that can always bring surprises and unexpected growth or otherwise in the most unpredictable places. To get out of the trauma spiral, the mere picking up of the threads of pre-trauma life and carrying on as before may not be enough. The way the threads are spun and woven has to change and new threads and patterns introduced.

When I consider the real difference between coping and transcendence, it is the quality of attitude and purpose that seems to make the difference, in particular the quality of compassion that allows a move away from polarisation of people and situations. If social action or the search for justice contains hate for others and a need to demonise, however understandable, the person will still be locked in the trauma cycle and tied to the perpetrator. Those who can find compassion for those who do them wrong truly transcend the trauma. One example of this is Jo Berry, the daughter of Sir Anthony Berry, murdered in the Brighton bomb of 1984, who now works for peace alongside Patrick Magee, the bomber, in spite of accusations that she is betraying her father ([www.theforgivenessproject.com](http://www.theforgivenessproject.com)). My friend, Marian Partington is also trying to transcending the pain of her sister's murder in similar ways. The route to transcendence seems to demand a world view described by Joanna Macy (1991), of the interconnectedness of all beings and *"seeing every person as your mother"*. As one of Judith Herman's clients wrote, *"I have burst into an infinite world full of wonder."* (Herman, 1997), showing a feeling of complete oneness and integration with all sentient beings that are found in many accounts of transcendence.

Such ideals can seem too far beyond the reach of many 'ordinary' people, yet, Alison Leonard, in *'Living in Godless Times'* (2001) provides a useful collection of stories about the transformations of 'ordinary people, not saints or gurus'. Leonard lists the common strands she found in the contributors to her book:

- They were all seekers, often finding a way out of an existing family or community belief system which they could no longer hold for themselves.
- A key experience or event triggered the story
- There were key people who inspired them
- Their journey involved a letting go of ego and a vision of wholeness.

- The travellers did not ignore complexities and they had experiences of such quality that they could not be described in terms other than themselves or be broken down into components.
- All had a wider purpose, often known since childhood, creative ways of meeting needs and a desire to relate better to society and family.
- Most significantly, they are all LIVING the question rather than grabbing at answers.

I observe from the stories I have read, certain names and practices that recur as major influences on people reaching higher levels of integration:

- Some kind of spiritual frame or meditative practice, especially those of Buddhism, Quaker practice, Sufi traditions, and Christian mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen.
- The works of people such as Carl Jung and Jungians, e.g. Joseph Campbell (1973; BBC2, 1990) and James Hillman (1990), who have tapped into the archetypal myths and legends from Greek myths to Star Trek, for their understanding.
- Literature, especially the visionary poets such as William Blake who can 'see the world in a grain of sand' and connect small everyday experiences to a much wider cosmos, and T.S. Eliot, especially his *'Four Quartets'*.

Paradoxically, I also experience that in growing beyond oneself, one also comes back more fully to the essence of who one really is and always has been

An experiential exercise I use has left me with a metaphor of how differently people approach crisis. Participants had drawn something very dear to them and in the exercise it has been destroyed. Their task was literally to pick up the pieces of their destroyed pictures. Some pondered for a long time trying to piece things together again exactly as before, some got angry and swept everything away, but one began to see everything differently and began to recreate a new and beautiful form, even breaking beyond the 2 dimensional boundaries of the materials. She had accepted reality and gone beyond the bounds of her previous 'life' to move into a realm with other dimensions to create something bigger than what went before.

Writing this section has strengthened my view that the world of trauma needs fewer interventionist obstetricians pulling and forcing growth and more midwives who will hold vigil alongside whatever is waiting to be born and who will nurture it until it can grow on its own. I intend to find ways of being one of them.

## HOW DOES MY MODEL RELATE TO OTHER MODELS OF TRAUMA AND GRIEF?

After the Diploma stage of my research journey in March 1998, I decided to explore how I could make better use of my Trauma Process Map as part of my practice. This became the focus of my M.Phil. transfer paper in 1999. During my viva, I was challenged to move beyond my experiential explorations and the literature that had inspired the original map to be more explicit about where my ideas fitted in relation to other academic models of trauma and grief. This led me to an exploration of the few existing models (e.g. Kubler-Ross, 1969; Parkes, 1972) that I had perceived (from secondary sources and training) to be too linear to help me explain and work through my own experiences. During my explorations, I also became aware of new models that were becoming public as I was developing my own. From 1998 to 2001 I was heavily engaged in more sophisticated experiential and practical developments of my map and its uses during my work in response to the Omagh bomb (1998-2001), the Paddington rail crash (1999), the Bahrain air crash (2000) and a fatal incident in Namibia (2000) as well as many workplace traumatic incidents.

The majority of this academic enquiry took place from 2001 when I changed my research priorities to give myself more time for exploring original sources and literature in more depth. I was by then able to read this literature without the emotional reactivity that I had experienced in the early years following my personal trauma and bereavement experiences. I could also read and critique the literature with greater discernment because I now valued my own personal knowing about these issues. This was the result of so many cycles of reflection and the comparisons I had made between my experiences and those of the people I had met in the course of my work.

During this phase of enquiry, I held the question: *"How could other models enrich my understanding; how could mine enrich theirs?"* I also suspected that my model could encompass quite a few of these models because it accepted diversity and acknowledged that different processes operated at different times and in different situations. I therefore ranged widely in my reading so that I would not be restricted by the boundaries of a particular discipline. I therefore studied academic accounts from different fields—from psychiatry, medicine and various branches of psychology; various therapeutic traditions from psychoanalysis to humanistic and transpersonal psychology; and accounts from sociology. I studied these in relation to different kinds of traumatic stress, general stress, coping and resilience; grief and bereavement. I give an outline

below of some of the connections I discovered between my model and the other models involved with disaster work –comma? trauma, coping, grief and bereavement, though many other models from sociology, human development and other medical fields feed into these.

### **Links with disaster recovery, trauma and coping models.**

My model uses my story to facilitate the telling of other stories. As such it is linked to the concepts of disaster experts coming from a sociological stance such as Quarentelli (1998) and Hewitt (1998), Davis (1999) and Scraton (2002, 2003) who believe that everything about disaster and trauma, from terminology to allocation of resources for coping, must be seen in their sociological, cultural and political context and from a wide representation of voices. The influence of post-modernism is apparent but the participative world view of Skolimowski (1994) and Bateson (1976) is paramount, represented in my model by the interaction between individual experience and external realities and the co-creation of one's path. The I emphasis on creating one's own path is in line with Herman's view (Herman, 1992) that true recovery comes from empowerment and authorship of one's own narrative. Horowitz (1976) also recognised the re-iterative quality of disaster recovery and the never-ending effort to make sense of it. The fact that a multiplicity of stories is expected means that the quest that is often mentioned in scientific research papers (Rose, 2002: 64 & 66) to explain why people process traumatic experiences so differently is not relevant because it is the norm, given the subjective nature of people. A more interesting question is to explain the predictable patterns, not the differences.

I have discovered the degree to which, via my first mentors, the early disaster response models built by professionals from direct field experience with survivors influenced my thinking. Disaster work in the 1980's and early 1990's, and therefore my model, was based principally on the work of people such as Lifton (1968), Kai Erikson (1976) and Beverley Raphael (1986) who drew a great deal from the crisis intervention models of Caplan (1964) and stress models of Selye (1956). Additional influences came from the grief and bereavement models of Parkes (1972) and Worden (1982 based on the early work of Freud and Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980: 38-43), as well as the work by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) and her followers, such as Keleman (1974) who inspired my model's spiralling form. Occasionally the work was infused with insights from other traditions, such as the Native American rituals for those returning from the trauma of war (Silver and Wilson, 1988) which have resonance with the need for a 'gathering ground' in the 'Void' phase of my model, and the innovative camps set up in



Britain to deal with the trauma of soldiers and to prepare them for their return home (Adam Curle, a camp co-ordinator, personal communication).

The predominant psycho-social perspective in which my model was first developed can be seen in the books written in the UK in the early 1990's that emphasised the role of social workers and other community professionals such as myself (Newburn 1993a, b, c; Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1990) and the fact that the first Disasters Working Party set up by the Government was made up principally of social workers (Disasters Working Party, 1991). This was superseded by a Mental Health based report placing trauma firmly in the medical model of symptoms needing treatments in trauma clinics.

I learnt that my model is a small contribution to the long search to frame disaster response and recovery since Victorian times, when industrial and railway accidents began to create larger scale disaster. Other trauma process models have been stimulated by the needs of legal and compensation issues. The First and Second World Wars, and especially the Vietnam War, have provided the legal and political impetus for defining trauma and attributing blame – either to an external event or the existing vulnerabilities or 'moral cowardice' of the victims. In addition, the military health services and organisations have sought quick treatments for symptoms to get people back to the front. The motivation for my model was neither for legal, political or compensation purposes, but purely for my own well being and sense-making.

Most of the more recent research based models only deal with small parts of the whole trauma process, mainly about the early post-trauma stages and the prevention or treatment of the most severe problems. They are often geared to their own particular school of thought or practice and can only be fully understood and used by that sector. Some have attempted models of the whole process (Horowitz, 1976) and some have devised integrative models which take account of coping skills and social context (Joseph et al 1997), as well as the conditions and processes that contribute to growth and transformation (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Linley and Joseph, 2000).

I can slot other models into the different phases of my model. For example the multi-modal coping skills models (Lazarus, 1977; Lahad, 1992; Lahad et al, 1996; Palmer, 1992) are relevant to the pre-incident phase; those that include the smashing of core beliefs (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Foa et al, 1989), the breaking of the continuum of life (Gordon & Wraith, 1993); neuro-biological changes in the moment of trauma, disruptions to memory and intrusive images (van der Kolk et al, 1996); fit the impact

stage. The cognitive- behavioural models to do with information –processing (Brewin et al, 1996); Ehlers & Clark (2000) and models of emotional-processing (Rachman, 1980) and van der Kolk's promotion of body-work (Pointon, 2004) are relevant to what can be done in the early stages of my model to remove blocks and encourage healthy coping. Many trauma processing techniques have arisen from them to deal with intrusive images, startle reactions, and narrative reconstruction, for example Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (Shapiro, 1988), the 're-wind' method of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Andreas 1989); narrative therapy (Bourne & Oliver, 1999). Specialist treatments relevant to the 'Whirlpool' experience in my model include various anxiety and depressive disorders, including simple and complex PTSD, arising from a failure to process the trauma (van der Kolk et al, 1996; Foa, 1997), and suicide prevention. Models of coping and transformation find their place in the later stages and movement out of the confines of trauma.

### **Links with loss, grief and bereavement models**

Traumatic shock has to be defused before natural grieving processes can be released so these models are essential to trauma models and vice versa. I had to know how my model linked to grief models, especially as I developed mine as a reaction to what I perceived to be the linear grief models of Kubler-Ross (1969), Parkes (1972) and Worden (1982). More thorough investigation of these indicates that their authors had no intention that they should be linear and they have suffered from over-simplistic and poor dissemination. Kubler-Ross's work was also with the dying rather than the bereaved. These models also broke new ground and challenged the taboos surrounding death so their importance to the field must not be acknowledged. Where my model differs is in its encouragement to people to value their own knowing and exercise their own choice in creating their own paths, however messy and mistaken.

I agree with Parkes (Parkes, 1998) that the old grief models have been challenged unfairly by more recent 'continuing bonds' models (Klass et al, 1996; Walter, 1996, 1997). These replace the concept of 'letting go' of attachments to the deceased with the building of narratives around them, often, I believe, with the danger of denying the finality of death. These new models can, however, be accommodated in the 'Healthy Coping' phase of mine and their concept that grief and bereavement journeys can be socially constructed to some extent resonates with my views. Another popular new model, 'The Dual Process Model', acknowledges the dual process of grief, whereby people move in and out of tasks to do with grieving and restoration, (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). This is an important recognition, but I still find it too simplistic for my messier

path that contained many multiple tasks that combined grieving and restoration, for example campaigning,.

The multi-dimensional nature of disaster, with its many repercussions, are accommodated in my model by its multi-spiral nature, where every time a new traumatic event erupts, then a new assessment of the new crisis state is needed which includes the consequences of all preceding primary and secondary incidents. Often the person rapidly descends further into the 'Whirlpool'.

### **Turning the map into a working model**

All these investigations made me more confident about using the model in practice. In the next section, I give a brief account of the practical knowledge I gained by putting the model out to public use and scrutiny.

## C 4

### **PRACTICAL KNOWING: LEARNING FROM THE MODEL AS I USE IT**

I have experimented with different ways of using my model in lectures, in therapeutic sessions and in workshops. I have used it as a map for assessing where people are in their journey and making choices about the action they take, as a training device for illustrating the nature of trauma, as a planning guide for choosing actions and as a framework for experiential exercises. These applications provided opportunities for further first-person enquiry and enquiry with others in different situations around the UK and in other parts of the world. It also marked the movement of the model into public view and the possibility for third person enquiry.

Apart from briefly mentioning my model rather hesitantly in a few lectures and training sessions and its use in 1994-5 in the creation of the book, *Journeys of Discovery* which was published in 1996, it was in the aftermath of the Dunblane shootings in 1996 that, encouraged by my colleague, Paul, the model made its first real entry as a method and model of disaster response in its own right. That marked the first of many cycles of action and reflection with myself and colleagues in which these questions emerged:

- *“How I could use the model to improve my facilitation of other people’s process at a very practical level?”*
- *“How could I fit my increasing range of skills in the model’s framework?”*
- *“Could the model (as well as the method of mapping) be applied to different types of trauma and to groups and organisations as well as individuals?”*
- *“How could I use the model in the early post-incident period before people appreciated the full impact of the incident and when officials are resistant to the idea of preventative action?”*

While living these questions in the aftermath of disaster and in training sessions, persistent issues I needed to address at more depth emerged:

- *“How do I deal with pre-crisis denial that limits what can be done after a disaster?”*

- *“How can I explain the need for preventative work to be done early after a disaster to people who at that time are fluctuating between denial and overwhelming images that scare them?”*
- *“How can people be convinced of the need to try new coping styles and methods when old ones are inadequate, and to be tolerant of others taking a different path from their own*
- *“How to work alongside people in ‘outcry’, expressing strong emotions that can easily turn to anger towards helpers?”*
- *“How can I warn people about the dangers of inaction (by individuals and systems) and long term or delayed problems without suggesting problems are inevitable?”*
- *“How can I best use my model as a guide when it is most needed soon after a disaster without discouraging people from developing their own?”*

During the development and practice of the model, I also underwent training in various techniques and methods such as NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming, Bandler & Grinder, 1979), EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Re-Processing, Shapiro, 1995), various methods of critical incident stress debriefing (Mitchell, 1988; Gal et al, 1996), and multi-dimensional coping methods (Lahad, 1992) from the originators or best practitioners of the methods. I was therefore looking for links with my model and how everything could be fitted together.

I now turn to some very specific applications of the model in its early pre-CARPP development that influenced how I presented it publicly as I became aware of unforeseen interpretations and inconsistencies in my own thinking. Fixing complex and subtle personal experiences linguistically is open to many different interpretations from people filtering what they hear through their own personal meanings (Baker, et al, 2002). My concern always remains that in trying to communicate clearly, it becomes too neat and logical and so fixed that it stultifies and dies. It can only be useful if it remains a living idea whose form adapts and grows.

## **THE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL**

### **Personal applications (First and some second person enquiry)**

The first personal application of my model in its embryonic state came in 1993 after the death of my daughter (Story Box 10 overleaf). I noticed that with this application of the model, I circum-navigated the map much more quickly than after the Hungerford

experiences, because a bereaved mother has the 'permission' of society and herself to be affected. The full use of the map is told elsewhere (Capewell, 1995). I also used, and continue to use the map for action inquiry 'in the moment' whenever I catch myself in negative cycles of thinking – I stop, notice my location on the map and ask myself, "What can I do, think or feel differently?"

#### STORY BOX 10

##### A PERSONAL USE OF MY MAP, 1995

*"...two years after Ann's death I can plot my progress through the model and also understand how it has helped me review my journey and stop me being caught again in the more destructive traps that I fell into after my Hungerford work. It was MY model, so it had more meaning than all the books on my shelves about death, except for CS Lewis' "A Grief Observed". But at first I wanted to tear my model up. How dare I or anyone talk about finding growth and opportunities from crisis after tragic deaths such as this which hurt so deeply. The idea of moving forward seemed so impossible and unwanted. I needed the pain - it could pierce the numbness and connect me in a tangible way to the beautiful person who had been lost. But then, in spite of my anger, I began to realise I needed a 'Gathering ground', a place where movement may still seem impossible, but from where all routes are possible. Thus I found myself using my model and accepted it grudgingly. My crisis had created a major challenge to my model and self-esteem, but my model saved me.*

- extract from Capewell, 1995.

#### **As a map for locating positions and giving permissions (Second person enquiry).**

In this instance, I use the model to locate people tentatively on the map as a first clue to their needs and the approach needed. This application was important not only for my own work but also to improve the ability of lay people and non-specialist professionals, such as teachers and managers, to make supportive and useful inter-actions with pupils, clients or staff involved in traumatic situations. A particularly important task is to connect with a person soon after the disaster and offer preventative support before distorted facts and perceptions are acted upon and create bigger problems. If mishandled, a sequence of consequences can be set up that lead quickly into the 'Whirlpool' (as in Story Box 8, p.152)

I noticed how I used the key observable features of each phase as part of my 'in-the-moment' action inquiry when making choices about tone of voice, choice of language and metaphor, channel of communication and how directive I needed to be with different people. I could place them in context, overcome personal reactivity and find the courage to deal with the hurt and issues that could not be expressed more usefully, as shown in Story Box 11.

### STORY BOX 11

#### USING THE MAP AS A CLUE TO NEEDS

*"She was practically immobilised by shock, guilt and a possible charge of manslaughter in a foreign country. The jeep she was driving on a youth expedition in Africa had spun out of control killing one young woman and injuring three other passengers. She could hardly move from her bed and was too ashamed to be seen by the rest of the group. Her whole being was like paper-thin china. I used my 'map' for guidance and to overcome my fears of dealing with a new situation. I gently moved alongside her to build up her fragile defences so we could create a 'gathering ground' and unfreeze her speech and body, whispering snippets of hope for the future, acknowledging that she would not yet believe anything would change. My model kept me going in spite of the 'protective membrane' (Freud, 1920; Lindy et al, 1983) being cast around her by colleagues, until her distress was unleashed, another point needing courage to withstand reactions of on-lookers.*

– Taken from my records, 2000

The model is similarly useful when strong emotions and behaviour indicative of the 'whirlpool' are observed, as shown in the last story in section E3. Such assessments warn me that extra protection is needed, through good contracting and supervision, as complex family or organisational dynamics have usually become established by that stage, for example in Story Box 2, 'Giving Myself Justice'. Re-emergence from the 'whirlpool' is another moment when the model can be helpful in reminding me that extra watchfulness is needed, in spite of the euphoria and aspirations of the person making the breakthrough that may be mistaken for permanent transcendence and growth.

Those of us who have to rely on observation rather than formal psychological assessment tests most often refer to the look in the eyes and body posture as signs of change in the people we work with, though of course this is not done in isolation. People who have reached the phases of adjustment and integration are full of life with

a posture that has none of the tensions or intense energy and adrenalin charged or angry person. The look in the eyes gives the greatest clues, moving from the fixed stare of shock or the ultra-alertness of adrenalin to the dullness of despair, sadness of loss or the haunted look of entrenched horror.

In some cases, I have returned to do the post-trauma follow-up session with a staff team and not recognised some members because their tension has been defused. Herman (1997) described people in this phase of healthy adjustment well:

*“ [they have restored their] capacity to take pleasure in life and engage fully in relationships with others... more interested in the present and future than in the past, more apt to approach the world with praise and awe than fear.”*

As I began to apply my model, I spontaneously used it in conjunction with Lahad's multi-dimensional coping model (Lahad, 1992) to assess resilience and build rapport, and Ayalon's 'Empowerment model' (Ayalon & Soskis, 1983; Gal et al, 1996) for the client to map their own range of coping styles. These methods were especially useful as they encouraged self-assessments and joint problem solving, even in the very early post-incident phases. When I first used my model after major disasters, In Dunblane and Omagh, I found that people instinctively placed themselves on the map. The map also gave the forgotten disaster workers, the 'natural' counsellors working at the coal-face of community grief such as caretakers, cleaners, youth workers and librarians, permission to be affected and accept their right to have help. While in Dunblane, eight months after the shootings, I met a disaster worker who was suffering vicariously rather like I had done at Hungerford. I shared my map with him and he immediately located his position. He was so impressed, he gained funding for me to run sessions for other workers whose roles and reactions had been unrecognised. The practical learning I gained from these was:

- the model helped people reflect on where they might be in their journey, especially if they have no map of their own.
- to give 'permission' for them to be in this situation at all - by providing a cognitive understanding of the process instigated by a traumatic event, even for those affected vicariously

**The model as a mediator for distress** (Encouraging first person enquiry in others).  
The map enabled people to deal with their distress because they had something



concrete to focus on. It also encouraged them into self-reflection without being asked. As Ayalon (1996) found, a metaphor 'elicits curiosity and yet helps maintain a safe distance from the personal feelings of vulnerability.' I found the map acted as a metaphor and gave people safety, because, as Robbie discovered, '*metaphor is profoundly respectful of the person since it encourages them to produce their own solutions and it also works at an unconscious level that need not be exposed to others.*' (Robbie, 1988). The map became an aid to building bridges between the inner and outer realities of group participants. Hearing me tell my story through the model also enabled them to project their own experiences on to it and relieved them of the embarrassment or distress of having to focus on their own story. It also meant the group were not over-whelmed by raw, distressing stories of other participants and my story thus acted as a buffer between themselves and their distress. I therefore used it more for this purpose in meetings with staff immediately after the Omagh bomb and other traumatic incidents.

**As a facilitator of self-empowerment** (Encouraging first person enquiry in others, second person enquiry together and with some spin-offs for third person enquiry). This use can occur at a personal and organisational level. In relation to personal empowerment, a parent bereaved by the Dunblane shootings told me:

*"What I really like about your model is that it doesn't tell me what I should be feeling or doing. You keep emphasising that the person themselves are in control. It accepts that people are individuals and it is up to them to choose."*

- April 2003

This feedback meant a great deal to me since I had been anxious about sharing my model, drawn from a vicarious experience of a worker, with a person involved directly in such a horrific trauma. The comment had picked out the aspect I had most wanted to convey – that the model's main purpose was to affirm people's own experiences and journeys, and to encourage them to take control of finding their own way.

It was also the concept of choice found in the model that seemed to jolt people into mobilising their own internal power. After using the model as a focus for collaborative enquiry groups I facilitated during the AGM of the Compassionate Friends (the international support group for bereaved parents) in Birmingham, September 1998, I received this feedback:

*'The pattern of the circle was reassuring to those newly bereaved who were there- to know that those powerful, scary and unfamiliar emotions are normal*

*and happen to us all. There was something there for everyone, [whatever length their bereavement] and especially for those who are trying to help others as contacts or group leaders without much formal training.'*

- Letter from Pat Neil, Editor of TCF Newsletter, 13.9.98.

I discovered that other people using my model had similar results. One piece of feedback about this came unexpectedly in 2001 at a Conference on Health and Human Rights in Dubrovnik. Someone who had heard me present my model at the 1 European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Conference in Paris 1995 came up to me with the following story:

*"Soon after the Paris conference, some family friends had been involved in a traumatic road accident in Belgium, killing the husband. I visited the widow in hospital and she told me that her whole life had fallen apart. I remembered your model and drew it for her on a scrap of paper. A few years later she told me that in her moments of deepest despair, she went to the drawer, pulled out my sketch of the model and reminded herself that she always had choice. It gave her the strength to keep going".*

The fact that the teller of the story was a former Chief Psychologist of his national Defence Force was particularly affirming because the work of people like myself is often devalued by clinical psychologists. It is unusual to hear about the impact of my lectures, but it is affirming when I do

Turning to group empowerment, I use the concept of process mapping in many post-trauma group sessions, by asking the group to map their own journey, thus giving them the message that: *"You can be in charge of your own journey and you can give it form by presenting it in whatever way you wish."* The act of handing over a pen or a lump of clay is also an act of passing over control to the client. I have also used mapping for staff groups and organisations to research their progress over longer term periods after the disaster to ensure the work continues after facilitators have left. Not only do they gain confidence in dealing with uncharted territory, they learn that they can take responsibility for their future. The basic teaching first undertaken in the hectic early days after the incident can also be reinforced and expanded.

Other examples of this application will be found in Part E, describing my work after the Omagh bomb and especially in the story recounted in section E3.

### **The model as a tool for planning a crisis response (Second leading to possibilities for third person enquiry)**

I discuss in Part D how I used the model for schools and other organisations when helping them to plan before a crisis or immediately after. The model was also used in the planning process for the statutory response after the Omagh bomb and appeared in their planning reports (Bolton, 1998)

### **As a tool for training and education (Multi-dimensional enquiry)**

I mentioned my model very tentatively in a conference paper given at the ESTSS (European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies) conference in 1995 in Paris. As a result other professionals asked if they could use it, for example Dr Reuven Gal, Director of the Carmel Institute in Israel, wanted to use it with disaster workers after the Kobe earthquake in Japan, 1995 (personal communication). I noticed how others used my model speedily without any of the inhibitions that made me cautious to do so. Many have used it since, for example to explain the strategies for the Omagh bomb response (Bolton, 1998). The Dunblane parent, a teacher, valued it enough to use it to train learning support staff in schools and in July 2003, Dr Ofra Ayalon, asked permission to use the model in a seminar for Israeli and Palestinian members of the Middle Eastern Children's Association because she found it to be the '*best representation of the trauma process*' that she has come across.

Though I use the model for disseminating information immediately after a disaster, it is best used in training courses well before an incident occurs. Using the model on these courses has several benefits:

- It is an invaluable aid for organising complex information on courses which are nearly always much shorter than I would like.
- It illustrates the concept of 'pulsed' response programmes advocated by leading practitioners (Pynoos 1988, Lindy et al, 1983) in which different styles of response are best offered intermittently at the most appropriate time after the incident. The need for a long-term strategic management programme is thus emphasised rather than a one-off application of one method (usually counselling or no response) to everyone regardless of need and readiness.

- It acts like a hologram that can be expanded to whatever time-scale is available, from a short lecture to a long-term training course. The longer the course the more I can employ practical and experiential training methods.

I have had evidence that the model has an empowering effect on the disaster workers I train. When I introduced the concept in a workshop at the Australasian Critical Incident Stress Association (ACISA) Conference in New Zealand in 1998, I asked the participants (disaster rescue and recovery staff) to draw their own maps before sharing mine. All the models produced had a circular or spiral element to them; none were purely linear. A Fire Officer in charge of the Melbourne Emergency Services Employee Support Team was especially excited by this exercise. He likened the actual traumatic incident to the place of most intense heat at the centre of a fire. From this centre, the flames and intensity of the heat fanned out and diminished, but always with the potential for re-sparking and re-igniting (like the re-triggering of reactions by sensory reminders of the incident). He had discovered a metaphor culturally congruent with his Service to which even resistant officers could relate. He was highly animated by his discovery and later used it in his training courses. I have borrowed it too. Another participant in the same group, a therapist, had used the idea of mapping with a client immediately after the workshop. The client was 'stuck' and had had made little progress in preceding sessions, but took to the idea of mapping her journey immediately and began moving forward.

**As an experiential training exercise or therapeutic tool for embodied understanding, personal growth and transformation** (Encouraging first person enquiry usually through collaboration with others)

This application goes much deeper than those used for cognitive and practical learning. I have started to experiment with its use for in-depth training of professionals and for transformational work with groups.

The model's use for experiential learning first occurred when I was asked to run a full day pre-conference workshop at the ACISA Conference in Perth, W.A., 1996. The workshop began in a similar way to the New Zealand workshop described above but I wanted to give people a more experiential understanding of what adjustment to trauma really means. I had planned an exercise for the intended small group in mind, integrating my model with an exercise I had used with Israeli colleagues when training Croatian and Bosnian psychologists during the Balkan War. Story Box 12 overleaf contains a brief summary of the event.

**STORY BOX 12****A LARGE SCALE EXPERIENTIAL USE OF THE MODEL**

*'Over 65 participants arrived so I had to think quickly and adapt the workshop to make the session possible and safe. First, the whole morning session was used to build up group support and safety before using the model as a frame for the day. When I felt the group was ready I introduced the exercise that represented disaster. Pictures representing something of special meaning were drawn and then destroyed. Participants were asked to pick up the pieces of their drawings and do anything they like with them, making use of all the resources around them (scissors, glue, adhesive tape and other materials were provided). This represented the point of choice between the 'whirlpool' in my model and the more positive choices of creative reconstruction. The reactions ranged from numb despair and immobility to raging anger. One participant threw every piece of debris away, while others tried to piece their picture back together again as it was before. A few chose the path of quiet contemplation and 'healthy coping' before rebuilding the pieces using the resources available into a different form. Every aspect of my trauma process map emerged. Cognitive presentations of the model were used to contain emotions and frame what had been learnt.*

– Taken from my records, 1996

This experience showed how the use of the model could create a realistic microcosm of the impact of disaster on a community, though I would never again take on such a task alone with such a large group.

Another opportunity for experiment came while working after the Omagh bomb. My associate, Lilian, invited me to an experiential workshop she was running in Dublin. On the last morning, the organisers asked if I would do something on post-trauma stress. I only had ninety minutes so I decided that the best way to communicate the subject was to do a living presentation of my model, especially as there was not even a pen and flipchart at hand. I had to be resourceful and use the only resource present - the people. I asked for volunteers to represent each part of the cycle and as I did so the scene began to come alive and turn into a moving drama. Many of the participants belonged to a self-help group of people with Hepatitis C and quickly became absorbed in the process. The exercise was messy and inadequately thought out, but none of that mattered because, in the rough edges, creativity could emerge and participants could both belong to a group experience and make it their own. I was well supported by the other experienced facilitators present and learning took place at a deep level. One

person related his own past experiences to the depths of the model's downward spiral, but he located himself very close to the traumatic event and seemed reluctant to move away from it. He wrote me a moving letter afterwards about the insights he had gained himself from the exercise. Leaving the traumatic experience to begin the journey into the unknown was too hard. The traumatic experience had become the known 'safe' territory, so he clung to the only anchor he had until encouraged by others to let go.

**As a facilitator of my writing** (First person enquiry using the writing as my collaborator)

I often speak of my model as if it is an independent, living being. It often feels that way, especially when I am trying to write. As mentioned in my description of the birth of the model, I saw this for the first time when bringing it into the public domain of the group writing the book, *'Journeys of Discovery'* (Mead, 1996) the model lubricated the stuck wheels of the group writing process. It formed a similar function in the following year with the writing of the Guidelines for School Crisis Management for the Irish Teacher Unions (Capewell, 2000a) and it often feels as if it has taken over and written an article for me.

The process of writing using the model as guide thus becomes a personal 'facilitator' that both helps me see where the model can be clarified and inspires new connections and insights. However, it is most useful in reminding me that the model is far more than the sum of its parts. It is only a simplified map of a very complex, contextual and individual journey that should never be used to neaten and control what is usually an illogical, messy and emergent process.

At the start of this chapter, I mentioned my reservations about the relevance of my model to people who suffer most in a major disaster. Just as I finished my thesis, I received an e-mail from a woman whose daughter was shot dead in the Dunblane school massacre in 1996, just six months after her husband died suddenly. She wrote:

*"I think the model of trauma survival which you sent me was pretty much perfect."* – e-mail, 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2004.

That comment meant more to me than any other I have received.

## **PART D**

### **MAKING PROFESSIONAL MEANING FROM MY EXPERIENCES**

#### **Sections:**

- 1. How I developed the basic concepts of my practice**
- 2. The management of self**
- 3. The management of task**
- 4. The management of context**
- 5. Revealing the principles underlying my disaster management practice**

The Trauma Process Map was the means by which I moved across the bridge from personal experience to an integrated professional practice. Part D moves my journey on to show how I developed an integrated disaster and trauma response practice to facilitate the healing of the human impact of tragedy. I shall focus principally on my work with major community disasters but will also refer to smaller scale incidents in schools and workplaces that have contributed to my understanding.

I shall reflect on the underlying concepts that influence the interdependent aspects of my practice and then consider each aspect separately— how I manage myself, how I manage the task in terms of process and content, and how I manage the different contexts of my work. As with the development of the Trauma Process map, I had developed the basic ideas behind many of the ideas and frameworks I present in the following pages before I joined the CARPP programme. They were further developed in the Omagh bomb cycle of action and research, and then through considerable reading of theoretical literature to be clear about the philosophical differences between my approaches and others. I have also devised simple diagrams to communicate complex processes to non-specialist audiences of community professionals and volunteers. The models are presented in their most up-to-date form and are the result of all my enquiries up until 2004.

The product of the work written about in Parts C and D will be brought together in Part E when I shall give an example of how I used action research as I worked in the aftermath of the Omagh bomb, based on the ideas and methods I had developed using action research into my practice since the Hungerford massacre.

## D 1

### **HOW I DEVELOPED THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF MY PRACTICE**

#### **THE BACKGROUND**

The movement from my initial Hungerford experience through the development of ideas and forging them into a professional practice was neither simple nor linear. It was a complex interaction of design, sourcing and developing resources, building, reflection and refinement as I lived the path I was making. My goal was clear. I wanted to pass on what I knew so that others could make better choices than I had done. My work at Hungerford contains the seeds of my present approach, but the seeds have flourished because they now lie in a rich bed of strong theoretical foundations and have sprouted a wider range of methods and resources, with varied tints of subtleties of application. They thrive in a quieter, well grounded confidence, though flashes of anger at injustice, denial and inaction may burst through if no one else is noticing them.

Establishing a business practice in a world where people wanted certain, concrete examples of methods and strategies was not easy for someone offering organic process work. I had to develop clearer principles and conceptual frameworks that could guide my work. I did this by using the following methods.

#### **Enquiry Methods**

##### **In-depth reflections**

My original notes and reports (Capewell, 1987) from the Hungerford shootings provided the source material for detailed study and reflection. I used a Community Development work model (Henderson and Thomas, 1980) and community action methods (Jelfs, 1982) to work out how I achieved each entry into different aspects of the response and how I established a presence, dealt with emergent issues and conflicts and jointly worked out solutions before leaving. I also used the seven stage format of critical incident stress debriefing (Mitchell, 1988; Mitchell et al, 1990) to gain perspective on my Hungerford story. I discovered beliefs behind my appraisal of my story, the thoughts, feelings and reactions to it, the critical points that could be reactivated later by reminders, and the coping strategies I employed at different stages. In addition, I exposed aspects of processes that had puzzled me, such as the reactions of my bosses, by using metaphor and turning my story into a fairy tale (see Story Box 13 overleaf). I also used Karpman's drama triangle (1968) as applied to the Cleveland



Abuse case of 1987 (Hawkins and Shoheit, 1989) to help me understand the victim-persecutor-rescuer dynamic that had entangled me. Appendix I lists the learning from the reflections.

### STORY BOX 13

#### 'THE KING AND THE WHITE STAG'

*The story was inspired by an image of two senior officers given to me by a colleague reflecting on my plight. It involved:*

*'... the King and the White Stag who could only be shot by the King and no one else'<sup>1</sup>, All of these characters, the King and the King's Men and a couple of women (one a henchwoman of the king, the other the little girl who flattered him and he petted) were so intent on bolstering the King's power and territory that they did not notice or care about the community in turmoil at the nether end of the Kingdom. Into that turmoil walked a woman, just arrived from a foreign land, not yet accepted into the Kingdom because she had not yet learnt the rules. Being on the edge, she was in a position to notice the turmoil in the community at the edge and too far away to be given attention by others. She at first tried to work to the procedures of the Court but her attempts to inform the King were met with ridicule and disbelief. She could not ignore what she saw and sensed, so she worked out her own rules. Only then, when she took her own power to act, did the King take note and he flew into a terrible rage.'*

*- written as part of an MSc assignment, Birkbeck College, Capewell, 1989.*

### First and second person enquiry methods

I used many of the methods described in section B4 to reflect on my own process during my post-Hungerford experiences and to restore my health and work. These (listed in Appendix I) contributed to the development of my Trauma Process Model.

### Posing questions

These questions gave direction to the core focus of my practice and enquiry:

- "How can the gap be bridged between the disaster community and those with experience and expertise?" This stimulated subsidiary questions such as:
- "How can the people in the wider 'ripples' of the disaster impact be reached, especially children, young people and other marginalised groups, and how can the stigma of accepting help be broken down?"
- "How can the human impact of disaster be managed in a way that does not create further trauma and stress to the community and disaster workers?"

- *“How can I make sense of my seemingly illogical reactions as a worker, not a direct victim, and how do these compare with others caught up in disaster?”*

### **Creating divergent cycles of action and reflection**

Following my first disaster experience, my subsequent wide-ranging disaster responses became cycles of action research that helped me understand the variables affecting the human impact. These disaster work experiences are listed in Table 1, section A3. As I met new people and ideas, my eyes were opened to new approaches and I also tested out ideas from my first disaster responses. I learnt more about the impact on disaster staff, which contributed to my own personal recovery and, through the people I met, to the shape of my future practice.

### **Creating dialogues and networks of enquiry**

This has been undertaken with other field practitioners, clinicians and researchers in the UK and around the world, especially California, New York, Australia, New Zealand and Israel.

### **Testing out the market**

As part of my business practice, I responded to a wide variety of requests for courses and other forms of help. I also experimented with open training and experiential courses. These helped me discern what was needed and the concerns at different periods of the development of the subject.

### **Writing, reading, listening**

Writing articles and lecturing, reading fact and fiction related to disaster issues, and listening to talks and lectures all contributed to my propositional knowledge

### **Creating presentational forms**

This activity has been a vital method of encapsulating my learning so that complex ideas can be communicated simply and quickly, especially in the immediate aftermath of disaster. I utilised the fact that people seemed to be drawn into responding spontaneously to diagrams and pictures with their own information and questions as they do with metaphor and story. They my diagrams became important tools of enquiry and enabled me to check out my thinking, transmit authentic validity, and gain more knowledge. I shall use these diagrams in this section as summaries of my learning.

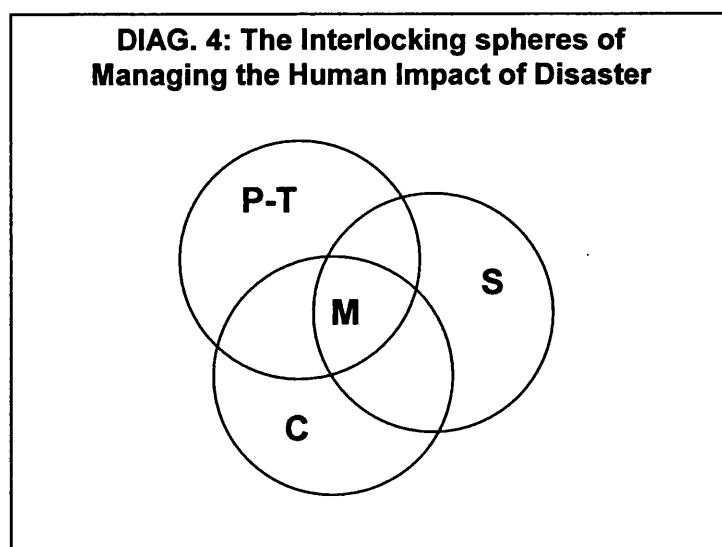
Through using this strategy of enquiry I discerned the **core aim** of my practice to be:

*“To promote conditions in which healthy adjustment and growth could occur at both individual, group and community levels”*

My primary concerns were crystallised in the questions posed above in the third method, ‘Posing questions’. Community contexts were my core concern. I worked with community agencies and schools as a means of reaching this core client, the wider community. I realised from that some of the problems I encountered with organisations stemmed from this fact. If there was ever a conflict over whose interests should be served, my loyalties always lay with the community that my client organisations were set up to serve more than the organisation itself. It also accounts for the fact that community work models have as much influence on my work as ideas from organisational management.

Deciding how to present my work has been a problem because it spans many aspects of disaster work and many different situations. However, as I reflected on my experiences I realised that a diagram I had used in a training course years before (Diagram 4 below) was still relevant. It shows the three core elements of disaster work that every piece of work must pay attention to and incorporate.

- managing the Task (process and content) – T
- managing Self – S
- managing the Context – C



It is to these spheres that I now turn, exploring each in turn in the following sections.

## D 2

### **THE MANAGEMENT OF SELF**

When setting up my business in 1990, I reflected on my previous jobs, skills and training to determine how I would manage myself. I saw I was at my best when working in an entrepreneurial style, and, given my experiences and personal post-Hungerford issues, I needed to be in a position where I could manage my own time and balance work and family commitments. I therefore decided to operate as a sole trader with a group of associates with complementary skills to assist when needed. I developed a network of people for personal and professional support. I wanted my practice to centre on professional expertise more than commercial objectives, though I needed to earn enough to support a professionally run practice.

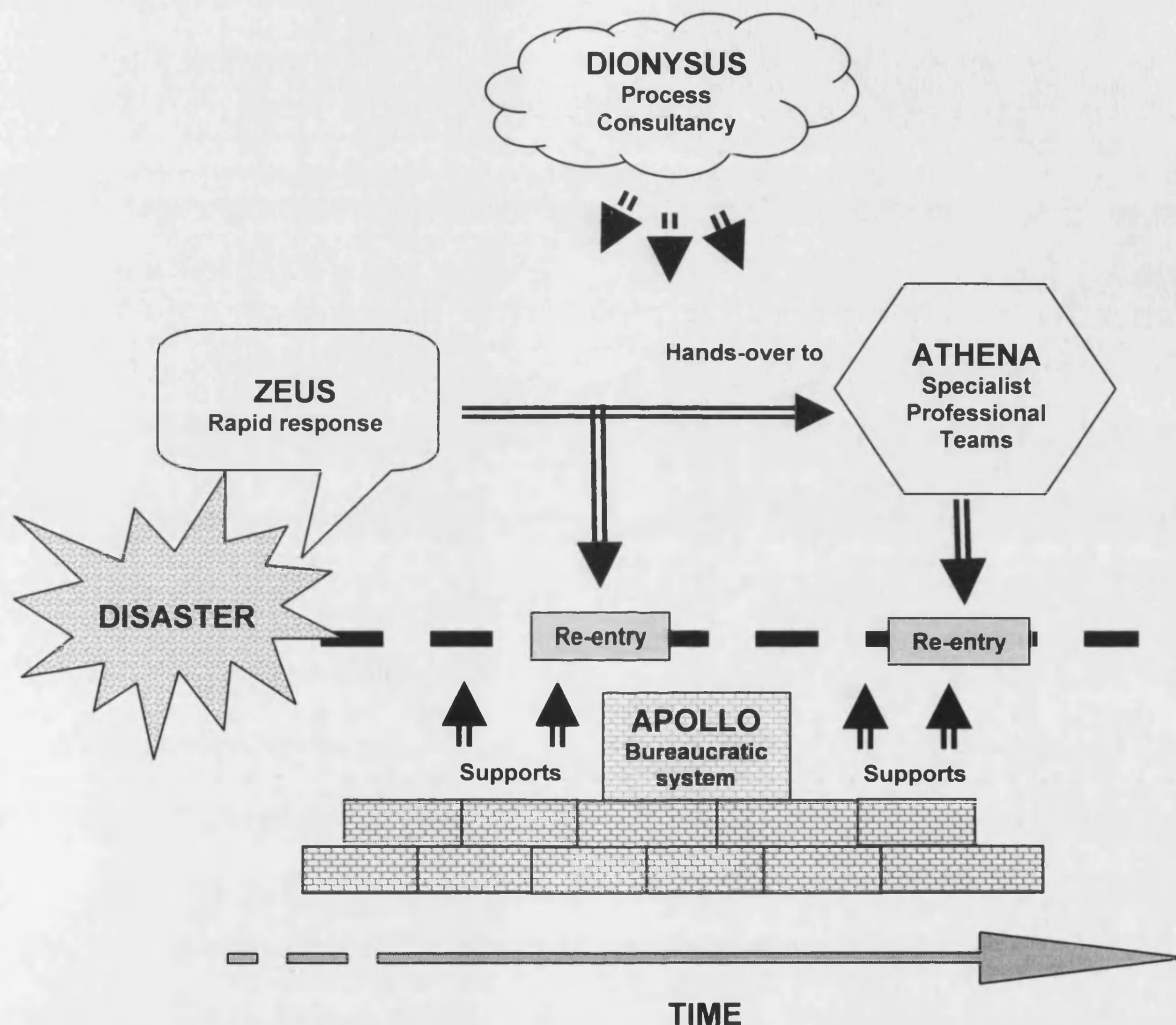
As I was in competition with other more commercial consultancies and usually had to work alongside public agencies, it was important that I understood the role I could play. First, as a very small business, I decided to look for a niche where I could offer specialist expertise. Given my background in education, community work and work with young people, I chose to focus primarily on school based crisis management, organisations employing or working with young people and community disaster. My other skills and experience meant I could offer training, preventative education and planning, post-trauma response tasks and work with survivor groups and staff teams. Some short term work with individual clients was logistically possible, but not my primary focus. I could only work long-term with individuals if they could cope with my occasional, unexpected absences.

Second, to define my role as an external consultant working alongside other agencies, I used the model of disaster management styles I created for a workshop in 1989 (later mentioned in Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1991: 74; Capewell, 1992), inspired by Charles Handy's book, *'Gods of Management'* (Handy, 1989). This model is shown in Diagram 5 overleaf. Handy helped me understand why I, as a middle manager at Hungerford working in an entrepreneurial ('Zeus') style, clashed so fiercely with my bosses who continued to work in their bureaucratic ('Apollo') style. The Zeus style, supported but not trapped by an 'Apollo' organisation, is needed in the heat of the disaster recovery and immediate aftermath. Once a reasonable level of stability has been reached tasks

can be handed over to specialist ('Athena') style teams such as Trauma Centres and economic recovery units.

#### DIAG. 5: THE CO-OPERATION OF THE GODS

Different styles of management are needed for different post-disaster phases.



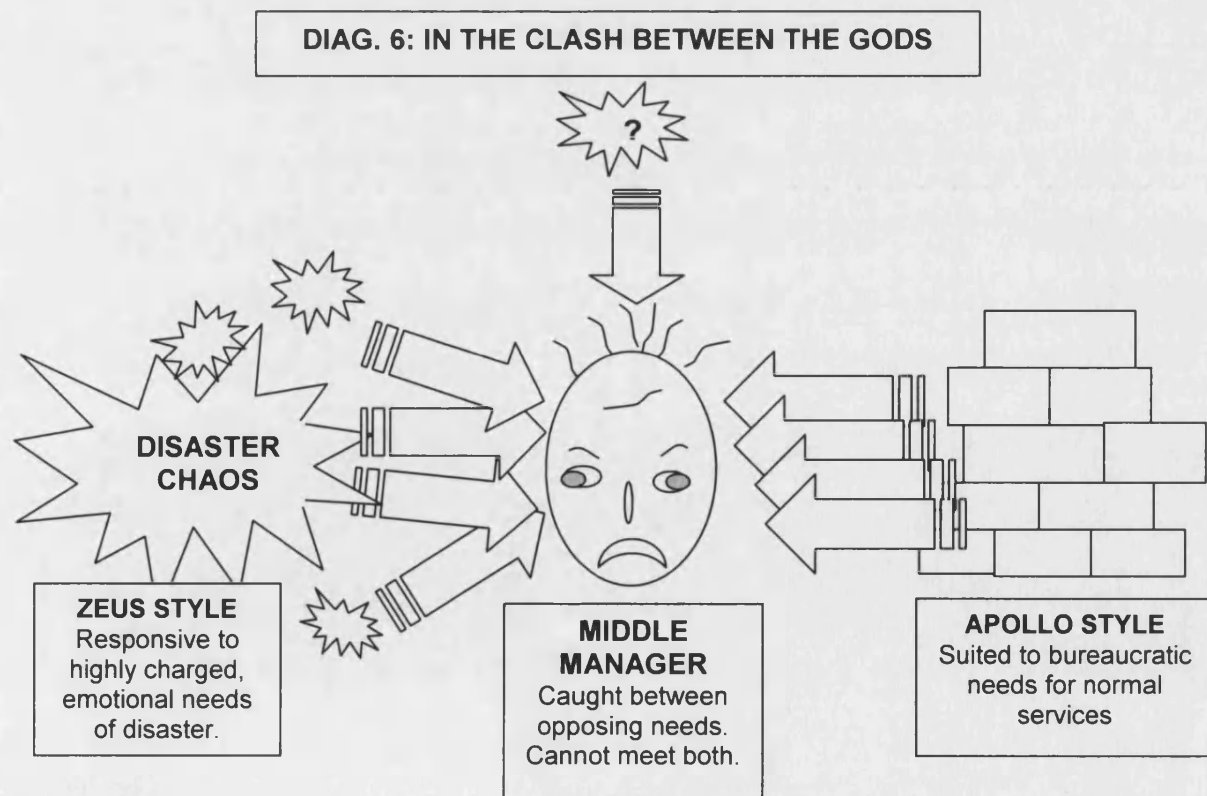
I realised that, as an external consultant, I could take either the 'Zeus' or 'Athena' role but I could also be keeping an eye on the overall process in the style of 'Dionysus', facilitating the elements that Handy believes were necessary for the smooth co-existence of diverse cultures:

- cultural tolerance
- bridges between them
- a common language

This was relevant to disaster work where the temporary disaster culture can feel like a foreign land to people on the outside.

Handy's work highlighted that *"the ways of one culture are anathema to another"* and why a move from one style of operation back to another (as when I returned from my disaster 'Zeusian' style to my normal job in the 'Apollo' bureaucracy) had to be managed well to achieve successful integration. I learnt from my own and other disaster staff that this was a very stressful transition (as in Whittam's account, Whittam and Newburn, 1993), which many did not achieve satisfactorily enough to stay in post.

Working in a style inappropriate to the task is a source of stress in itself for disaster staff. The model helps disaster staff to understand how their individual experiences are an interdependent part of complex systems which do not find it easy to adapt quickly to chaotic situations, preferring to deny the new reality. Not surprisingly they emerge from the experience using phrases such as 'crushed', 'wrung out', 'abused', 'consumed by rage' and 'not knowing who I am anymore'. I added Diagram 6 below which brings immediate recognition when I show it to people trapped in this experience. The needs of the disaster community and 'Apollo' style organisations are largely incompatible.



## D 3

### **THE MANAGEMENT OF TASK**

Reflections on my early cycles of action highlighted that facilitating the two aspects of my task, process and content, were inextricably intertwined. The tasks, such as structured post-trauma meetings with school staff teams, were part of the on-going process of establishing needs and gaining entry to each aspect of the work. In addition to these overt task processes, I was also working with the underlying, covert processes of the organisation and its individual parts. The balance between task and underlying organisational dynamics shifted according to my role in each disaster, for example, when I was employed in an 'Athena' role in the Liverpool Hillsborough response as a member of a consultancy team I had with very specific tasks and was not responsible for overseeing the overall response process..

Defining the essential task of my work has been important, as this guides the process and content of what I do. This core task has both a spatial and temporal dimension (Raphael, 1986). The spatial element is particularly important in the early aftermath of the disaster when the extent of the disaster community and its needs are ill-defined and when preventative work can best be done. The temporal dimension gains in importance as needs change over time. I shall describe how I developed the underlying concept that influenced where I position my business (in the gap between need and sources of help) and then consider the different methods and content, overt and covert processes that have to be managed over space and time to achieve the final task of healthy re-stabilisation of individuals, groups and communities. There is of course overlap between the two dimensions.

### **MANAGING THE SPATIAL DIMENSION**

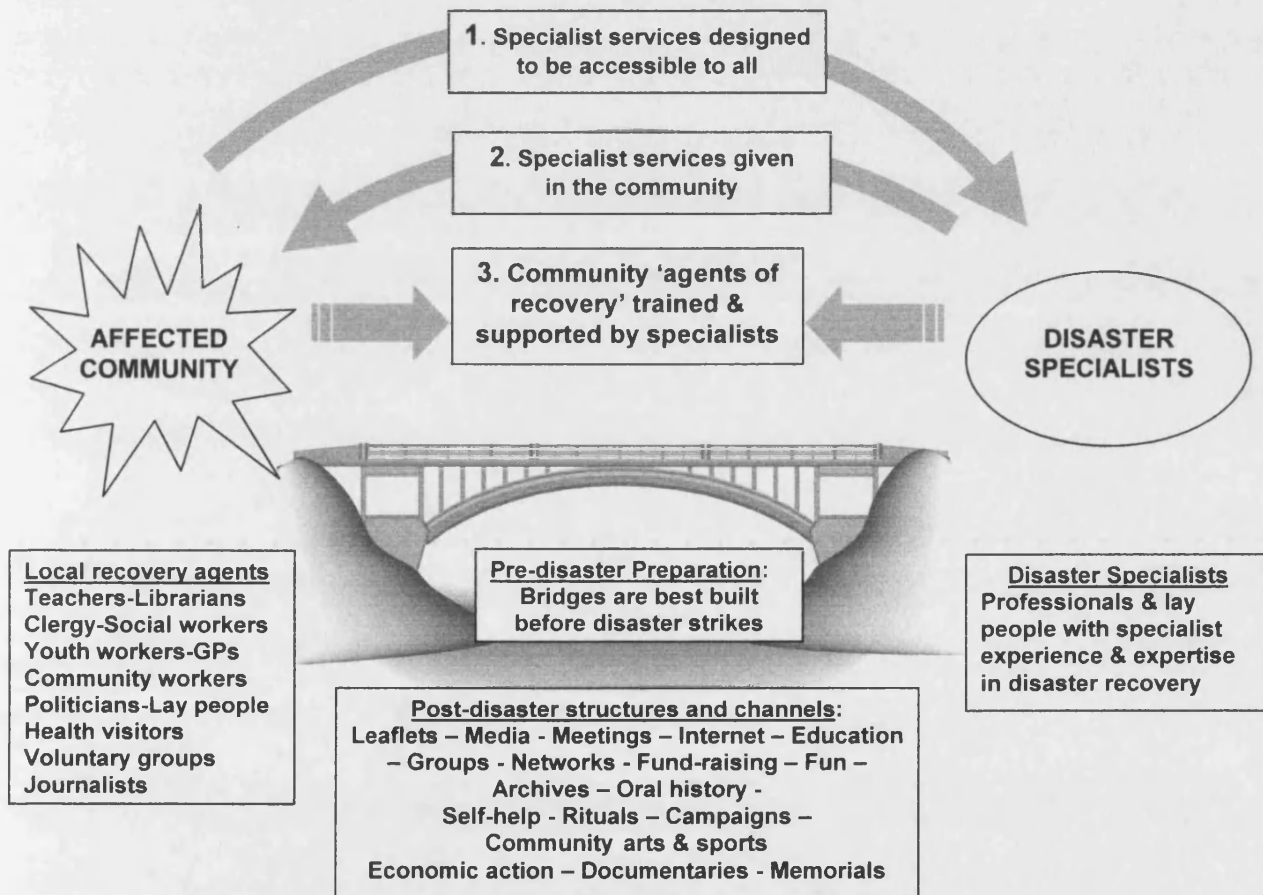
#### **Bridging The Gap: A Task-Process Framework**

The yawning gap between survivors and sources of help was one of the strongest images produced from my first three disasters and was evident in later disasters. As one Omagh bomb victim told me it was like being on a sinking island with lots of people across the water rushing about pretending to be helping, without daring to come close. Psychological blocks to asking for help included shame, denial, anxiety and the stigma of being seen 'as weak', while organisational blocks were caused by lack of preparation

and experience, and fear of distress and failure. The question I posed in section D1 about this led me to sketch out the problem and possible solutions on paper. A framework developed in which a complex of tasks (content and process) and human dynamic processes could be fitted. The 'human dynamic process' work involved attempts to remove, defuse, or by-pass such blocks in order to bridge the gap.

The model that resulted, 'Bridging the Gap' (Diagram 7, below), helped me clarify what was needed to build the bridges through the development of systems before a disaster, and by community based actions in the immediate aftermath.

**DIAG. 7: DISASTER RESPONSE OPTIONS: BRIDGING THE GAP**



The model shows the gap between the two sides needing to be connected: the affected community or individual and the sources of help. The gap is particularly wide where specialist professional help is concerned, but it can also exist for non-specialist professional services and help from family, friends, school or work-place. The supports of the bridge are best constructed before a disaster occurs through good preparation



and planning. Immediately after the disaster bridging can be achieved by a wide range of activities that directly and indirectly inform people about the multi-dimensional impact of disaster and the multi-dimensional nature of recovery in which attention needs to be given to physical, emotional, spiritual, legal and relationship issues. From my personal and practical experience, I distinguished three groups of bridging options open to support services, and these should all, I believe, be offered. The options are:

**Option 1: Specialist services are designed to be accessible to all sectors of the disaster community.** In this option, specialist services such as social support and mental health agencies would be designed to be so accessible and welcoming without any barriers to different sectors of the community. Lengthy waiting lists for treatment at National Health Service trauma centres are a major problem and referral often depends on the ability of GPs to detect and diagnose trauma reactions. Survivors of the Berkshire rail crash, 2004, reported that doctors dealt with physical injuries but ignored the injuries of traumatic shock, except perhaps to prescribe sleeping pills that interfere with natural healing processes (personal communications).

**Option 2: Specialist help is offered in community settings.** Seeking help from specialist services requires an ability to deal with bureaucratic systems and 'gatekeepers' which many traumatised people cannot handle. Thus, services are best provided at the point of need within the community, if possible utilising existing community mental health services. For example, mental health professionals worked on the football terraces with Hillsborough disaster survivors who returned there to remember and, without the barriers of clinical trappings, were able to approach people as human beings offering basic but good quality information and support that enabled them to access the next level of help.

Not all mental health professionals, however, can adapt from clinical to community settings. I have found in most of my disaster responses an unwillingness of some of them to suspend their usual protocols and work with survivors and bereaved on their terms in their locations, while at the same time complaining that their clinic based services were not being used. Following one disaster, the response co-ordinator considered replacing the local service with independent people who possessed the flexibility to adapt to what was really needed. Story Box 14 on the following page is another example, from my work after the Docklands bombing, where a clinical therapist did not grasp the importance of flexibility. Her presence could have been an important stepping stone for teachers or parents to seek specialist help in the future.

**STORY BOX 14****INFLEXIBLE STYLES**

*"I had organised teacher led class groups to provide an initial forum for children to tell their stories and share self-help ideas after the Docklands bomb. Specialist child mental health professionals turned up at the school and I allocated one specialist to each class teacher to support them in whatever way was needed on the first day back at school, while discreetly monitoring the children. Some could adapt to this non-invasive presence, even if all they did was help sharpen pencils. One in particular became difficult and wanted to run group therapy sessions for the whole class. This was quite inappropriate for a class of children in a school context where there was no permission, and probably not the need, for this kind of in-depth therapeutic work."*

– Taken from my records, 1996.

I observed that offering and receiving help were sensitive issues concerning power inequalities and stigma for people who had lost control of their lives in the disaster. My understanding was deepened after a lengthy e-mail dialogue in 1999 with an action researcher in Northern Ireland, Marie Smyth, from which we concluded that the helper-helped power difference was more important to the gap between the two than the insider-outsider dynamic. I also observed inequalities of power in the survivor group, according to their level of exposure and whether they were bereaved, injured and uninjured. This created a '**hierarchy of suffering**' (and thus the hierarchy of who 'should' be affected and who deserves help) and '**downward comparison**' (Perloff & Fetzer, 1986; Teschedi and Calhoun, 1995: 65) by which people manage the stigma of victimisation ('others are worse off than me'). The act of asking for professional and personal help often created feelings of incredible shame. I had myself noticed the loneliness of trying to find professional and other support for my daughter, myself and family during my daughter Ann's illness and after her death.

Theories from sociology offer some explanation for these phenomena, for example '**Attribution theory**' (Aronoff & Wilson, 1985) where an offer of help is a judgement of inability to cope and '**Reciprocity Theory**', (Trivers, 1971; Axelrod, 1984), where independence is maintained by a reciprocal 'give and take'. They show why some victim/survivors can only regain independence by refusing help and attacking the helpers. Messages by community leaders normalising acceptance of help are thus

important and help needs to be given in a non-patronising way that does not abuse the victim-helper power relationship. It needs to build independence and to be given without the expectation of gratitude.

### **Option 3: Empowering Community Professionals and Lay People as 'Agents of Recovery'**

Monat and Lazarus (1977: 346) suggested that community professionals act as mediators between individuals and psychologists, first to facilitate the initial contact and then to prevent premature leaving when it is realised that real recovery involves facing painful realities and emotions. Given enough preparation and training, there are many existing professionals and lay people available in the community who can offer basic information, support and ideas to mobilise individual and group coping resources (Barnard et al, 1990; Burke, 1989). The most readily available local 'Agents of Recovery' are teachers, clergy, librarians, GPs, health visitors, journalists, social workers, people in various voluntary agencies and staff in local companies and employing organisations. The better the whole community is informed, the more supportive that community will be and the better able to tolerate and manage the differences that can fragment and weaken families and communities affected by disaster. These 'agents' are in a position to reach out to many people who in turn will be supporting victims and survivors. Family members, friends, colleagues and local professionals make up the recovery environment which is an essential back-drop for specialist help. I became one of these agents in the West Berkshire community after the Berkshire rail crash, 2004, (see section F2) when I organised open information meetings for community members.

I have placed my work in the middle of the gap between survivors and specialists. Finding ways to build bridges accounts for most of my professional practice, whether it be in training community professionals and encouraging their organisations to prepare systems that will fulfil option 3, or training specialist professionals in outreach skills (Option 2) or how to make their services more accessible (Option 1). Option 3 is needed at all stages, before, during and after the disaster, because it creates an effective rescue and recovery environment, in which recovery work can begin during the rescue to reduce problems. No clinical treatments can take place in isolation from the social context (Ajdukovic, 2003) and the need for them may be reduced if the local social environment is well informed and supportive. Yet it is the community outreach element of crisis management that appears to be declining in the move to greater central control in post- September 11<sup>th</sup> national contingency plans (Turney, 2001; Civil

Contingencies Bill, 2004) and in the increased expectation that post-trauma reactions can only be solved by medical treatments or clinical interventions. This trend means that only people with, or deemed to be at risk of, clinical post-trauma reactions receive help, with sub-clinical reactions receiving little attention even though they may escalate into bigger issues of health, economic and relationship problems.

Developing this model involved a deeper exploration of the processes that contributed to the building of these bridges and the blocks they had to overcome. I shall turn to these now.

### **Community Outreach as a Facilitator of Psycho-social care**

*“Social reconstruction is a process within a community that brings the community’s damaged functioning to a normal level of interpersonal and group relations and renews the social fabric of the affected community”*

– Ajdukovic (2003)

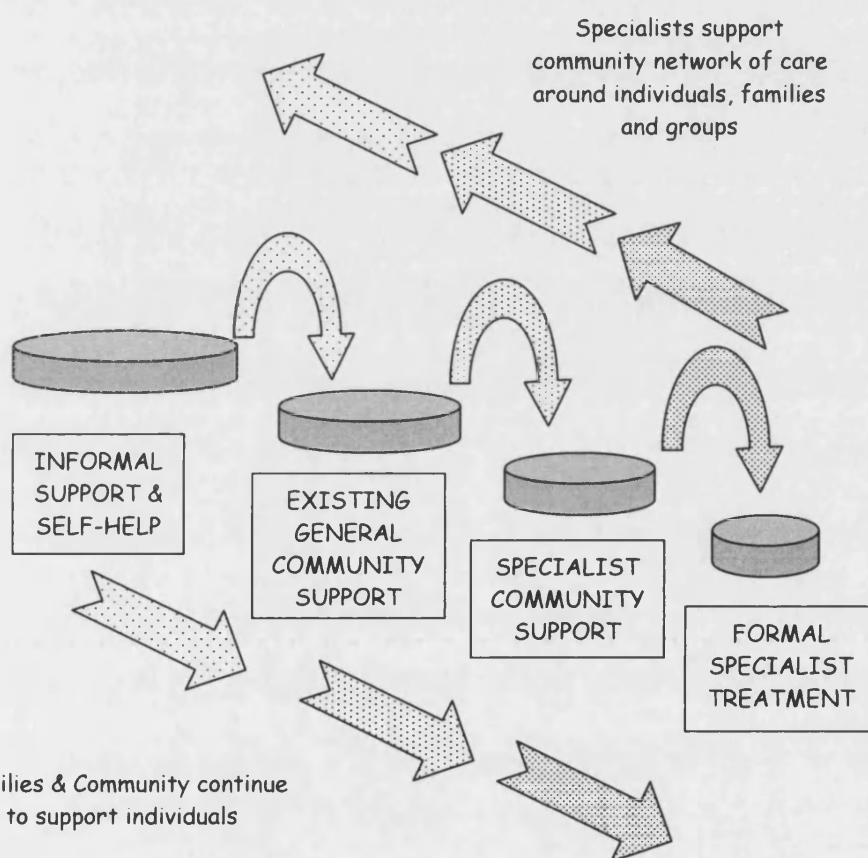
I have observed that the community work processes to which Ajdukovic alludes were instinctively understood by some but incomprehensible to those who only understood visible methods as valid work tasks. I realised I had to find ways of explaining the concept of community outreach more clearly so I developed two more diagrams (Diags. 8 & 9 on the following pages) to raise awareness. I also wanted to show how action could begin before the full extent of the disaster was fully known by service providers and before the full impact was realised by survivors. The diagrams have a temporal as well as a spatial element, but the temporal work cannot begin unless the spatial impact is managed first.

The diagrams illustrate how, in most disasters, the full extent of the disaster impact is rarely known. A wide range of options (supported self-help, community and specialist professional services) are all needed, and specialist help may not be accessed without the ‘stepping stones’ provided by various forms of community outreach and ‘recovery agents’. At first a large net has to be cast widely to offer help as generally as possible to the whole community, regardless of level of impact, so that survivors and their carers receive information and ideas. This will be enough for most people to mobilise their coping resources, but some will fall through the net and need to be ‘caught’ by the ‘nets’ of more targeted support. A few will again slip through this net to the specialist nets of medical and therapeutic treatments. I also wrote a story (Story Box 15, p. 200) as an example of what community outreach looks like in practice, showing that

outreach processes mainly involve the creation of opportunities for purposeful, high quality facilitative conversations.

#### DIAG. 8: STEPPING STONES TO DIFFERENT LEVELS OF HELP

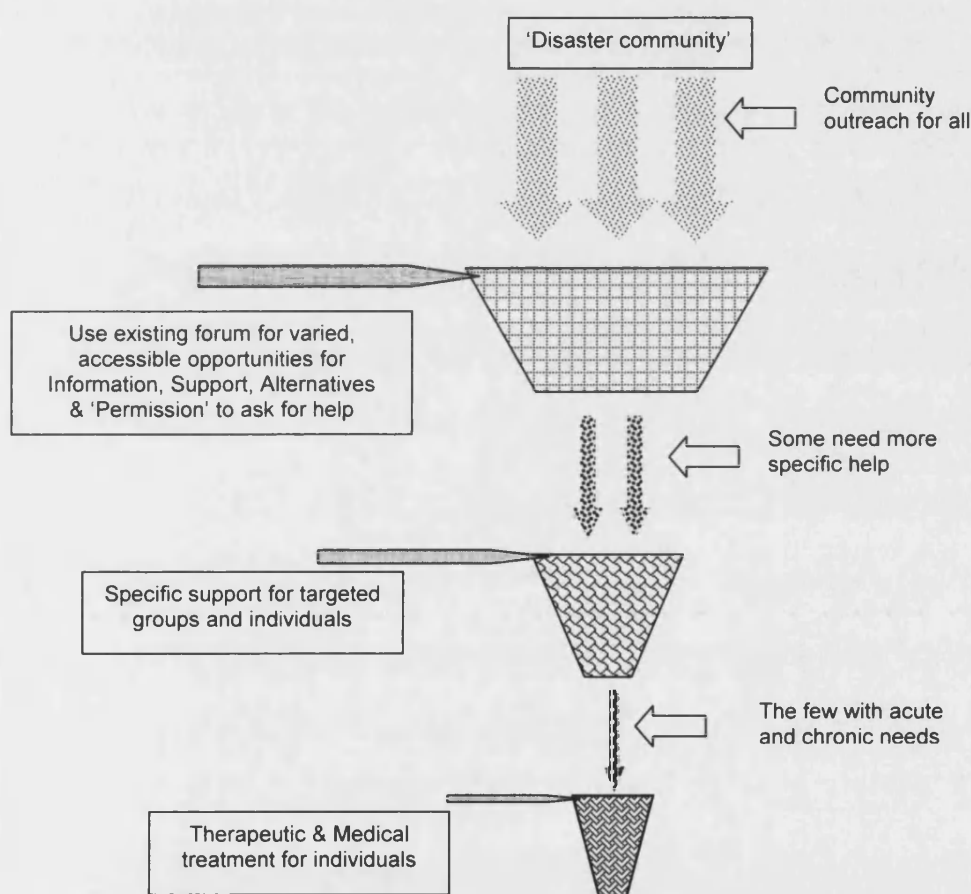
**Principle:** Trusted people give information, support and ideas so that victims have a knowledge of what can be done and the courage to ask for help for the type and level of help most appropriate to their needs.



### DIAG. 9: The Fishing Net Model for Offering Appropriate Help

#### Principle:

- Everyone benefits from an informed, supported community.
- Many people need a little information & support, only a few need specialist help.
- Catch all you can in simple 'nets' first, keep specialist 'nets' for extra need.



**STORY BOX 15****Community Outreach in Practice**

*"A house fire killed a mother and her two children. Many local residents took part in the rescue, and others saw the removal of bodies..... They sought support from the local Primary school Head teacher. The school Governors invited me, as a private consultant, to assist the school. No statutory agency, including Education welfare or psychology services, had offered help. I chose a facilitative, community based style training staff as 'agents of recovery'. Several parents asked for my help as they felt judged by statutory services. I chatted with one at her home while she did the ironing and the children played. Eventually, she felt safe enough to talk about their trauma. She had also lost relatives in the Hungerford shootings. I found ways of affirming her abilities as a mother first and then gradually wove information into the conversation about the children's reactions to the fire so that ideas were rooted in the existing family culture. The woman was terrified of her husband's reactions to my presence and she panicked when she realised he had come home early. I went out to meet him to act as a buffer. Immediately, he started telling me how the fire had affected him and how it had triggered reactions to two other recent traumas, one where he pulled a body from the canal and a road accident in which he had narrowly escaped death.*

*This is what I call 'on-the-hoof counselling' - going to where people feel safe and where help and information can be given in the whole context of their lives. In the school, teachers were given skills and information which empowered them and, as it turned out, helped them deal with another trauma in the school a few weeks later. I also encouraged the school to use other sources of help including statutory agencies, who immediately made it clear my presence was resented. Social Services opened a counselling centre in a rarely used hall, with volunteers untrained in trauma or outreach skills. No one used the service, so they concluded that no one was affected. Yet people continued to seek help from the school, and an open meeting about fire safety was attended by a large audience also wanting information about their reactions."*

*-Taken from records, November 1990*

**Managing the Blocks to Bridging the Gap: Resistance and Denial**

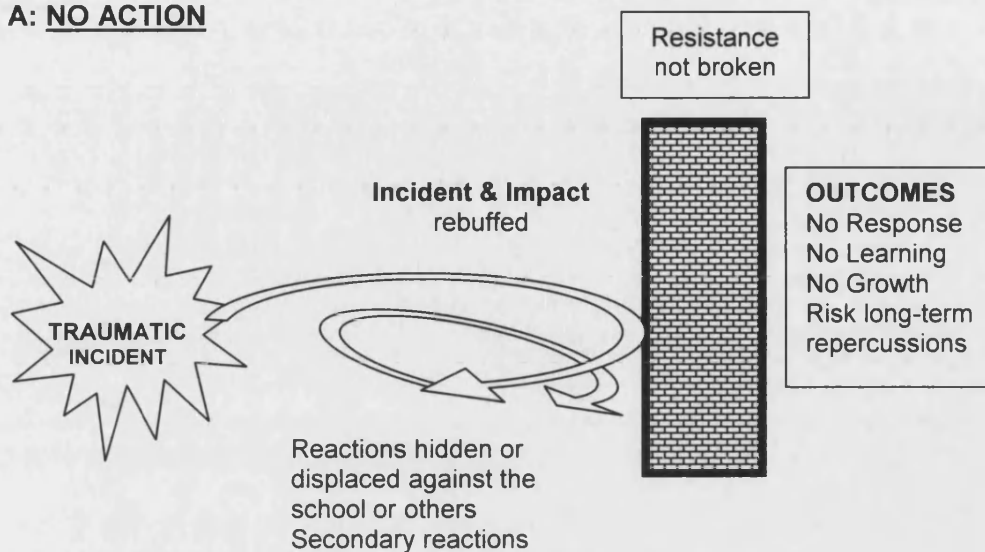
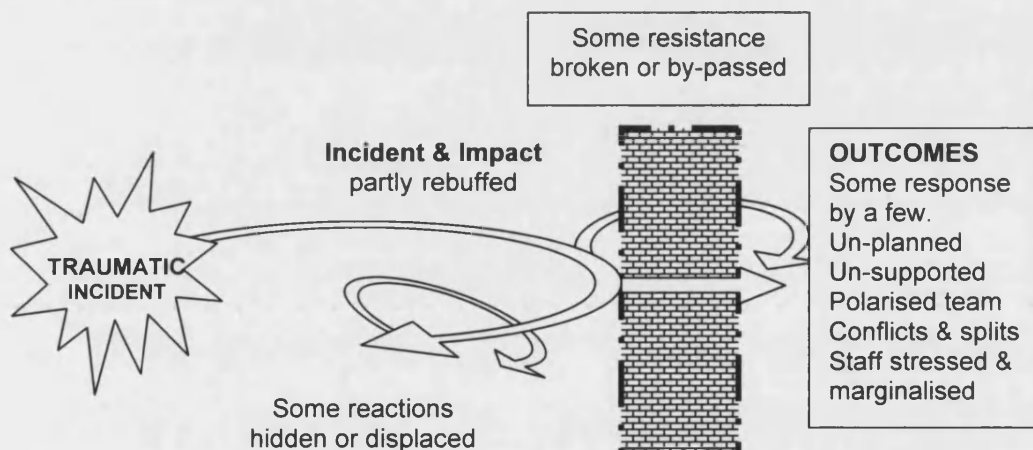
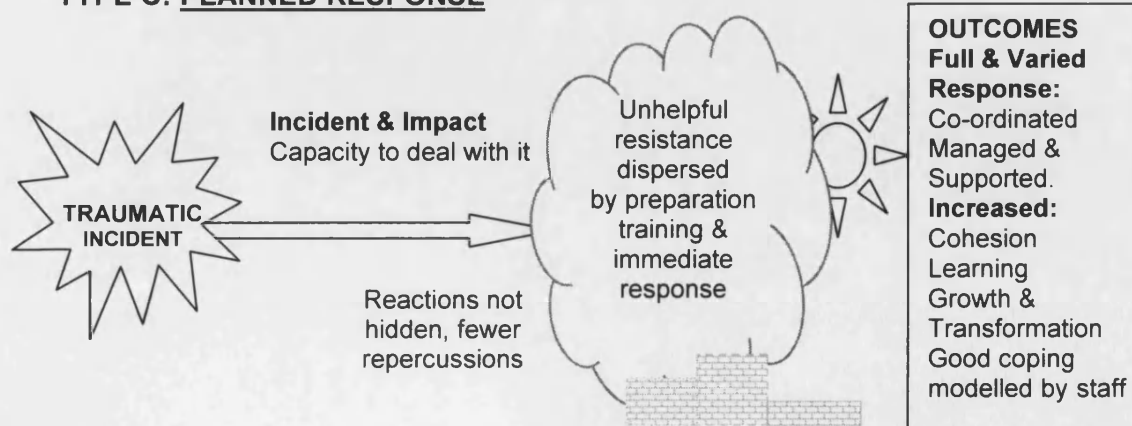
Crisis management could be simple if it were not for the many acts of resistance and denial that cause delays and exhaustion. Denial of the existence, impact and implications of a disaster and the need for action are elements of denial identified by Cohen (2001).

When working alongside individuals, especially senior officials, I have to work with great sensitivity. I seek to raise awareness of denial by integrating elements of information and support in all my ad hoc conversations, guided by questions that help raise awareness of their personal appraisals of the situation and styles of coping. Of greater concern is the denial embodied in official 'gatekeepers' of resources and in institutions that affect policies and services. To raise the subject of denial at an organisational level, I make use of diagrams (Diag. 10 on the following page) of three scenarios which are composites of the cases I have encountered, especially in schools. The anonymous models overcome the problem of confidentiality as organisations can easily be recognised from the details of incidents. The diagrams are based on the principle that all traumatic incidents involve unexpected change and change always creates tensions and resistance associated with fear of the unknown (Plant, 1987). Resistance is represented by the brick wall in the diagrams.

In the first scenario, there is complete denial of the need and denial of the role and responsibility of the school or organisation to respond. Thus reactions of traumatised people have to be repressed with the result that they are left to fester and develop into bigger problems for the individual and system, as Ayalon (1993) found happened with a group of students taken hostage in a terrorist attack on a school in Galilee. In the next scenario, some parts of the system refuse to respond, but a few people manage to break through or by-pass the resistance and get help covertly. This can lead to polarised attitudes and burn-out for the few who carry the burden of hearing distressing stories. The third case is the ideal, where most resistance is defused by training and support either well before an incident happens or soon after before they begin to respond. The result is that individuals and the organisation move quickly into healthy ways of coping and are more likely to achieve learning and a greater sense of cohesion.

The diagrams provided me with a means for challenging 'management by denial' (Walsh, 1989: 214) in more sensitive, less reactive manner. When shown the diagrams, managers can see at a glance that they have a choice between the three options and their likely outcomes. Using the diagrams in training sessions also triggers enquiry as participants immediately start matching the models to their own schools and organisations.



**DIAGRAM 10: OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH RESISTANCE & THEIR OUTCOMES****OPTION A: NO ACTION****TYPE B: AD HOC RESPONSE****TYPE C: PLANNED RESPONSE**

## MANAGING THE TEMPORAL PROCESS PRECIPITATED BY DISASTER

### Strategic crisis management: Using the Trauma Process Map for Planning

The Trauma Process Map described in Part C illustrates the temporal, longitudinal aspects of the process triggered by traumatic events. The temporal dimension is however complicated by distortions in time experienced by traumatised people and by the non-linear nature of the process. Different people also experience different phases at different times and inter-personal conflicts arise from the different speeds of progression up, down and around the spirals. I therefore adapted the Trauma Process Map to act as a template (Diag. 11 on the following page) for planning a strategic response that can be used by individuals, communities and organisations. I have also used it after disasters (see section E1) to give an overview of the temporal process and as an explanatory device to communicate to promote the need for a strategic, phased response.

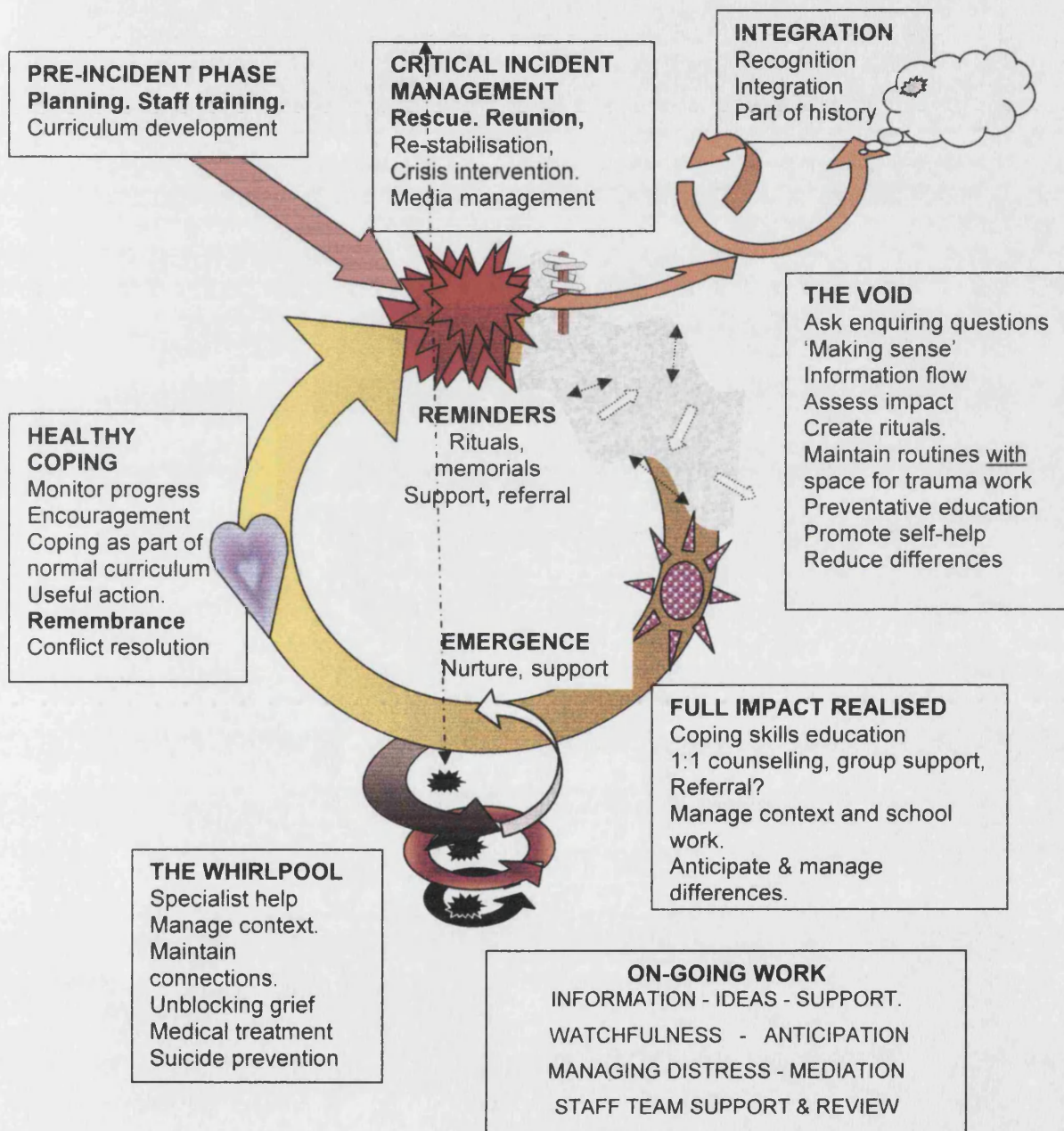
Using the diagram, I can communicate the following features of post-trauma journeys:

- the need for a wide, strategically timed range of different lay and professional responses, countering the assumption that help-lines and counselling centres are the only solution or that people must wait until psychological symptoms develop before seeking help.
- progress after trauma is rarely simple and linear.
- they are composed of many different elements which can lead to growth, stagnation, fruitful and degenerative choices, hope and despair at different times and that deep growth comes from negotiating all aspects of the journey.
- preventative action in the immediate post-trauma phase is preferable to the 'wait and see' approach whereby nothing is done until problems are visible and entrenched, making recovery harder to achieve.

The model outlines the tasks required at each stage, beginning with pre-crisis planning and, in schools, a curriculum that fosters coping and emotional literacy. During the impact and immediate aftermath stage, the emphasis is on rescue and recovery that does not add to the trauma, followed by measures that are designed to process the experience and offer preventative education to reduce further problems and create an informed, supportive recovery environment. The 'Whirlpool' is the time for specialist help and a wide range of support strategies, while those who reach the phase of healthy adjustment will be supported by encouragement and watchfulness. When

reminders of the trauma are reactivated, the need is for anticipatory guidance and self-help techniques, referral to specialist treatments. Planned reminders include community events and memorials.

**DIAG. 11: The Trauma Process Model: Planning a Response**



The springboard for a good long-term response is the good management of the confusion and anxiety in the immediate aftermath. Clear process guidelines for managers were needed to help managers move from helplessness and anxiety into action. I devised the following questions (Table 3, below) from the enquiring questions I had posed to myself when designing the Docklands bomb school response.

**TABLE 3: KEY QUESTIONS WHEN DESIGNING A RESPONSE**

- WHAT ARE THE FACTS & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT TO THE PARTS AND THE WHOLE OF THE COMMUNITY?
- IS IT OUR BUSINESS?
- WHO IS IN CHARGE?
- WHO IS AVAILABLE TO RESPOND?
- WHO IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT?
- WHO ELSE IS AFFECTED (Ripple effect)?
- WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?
- HOW SHALL WE TELL THEM?
- HOW SHALL WE RECORD DATA?
- WHAT CAN WE DO NOW? - practical responses, psychological responses, media responses?
- WHAT CAN WE DO NOW TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE?
- HOW DO WE CARE FOR OURSELVES

The means of gathering the data from which solutions could be derived also became part of the response and made early action possible when managers expected to see visible activity even though the situation was unclear. The list of questions in Table 3 was simple enough to be used by any manager, trained in disaster impact or not. Prior planning and preparation could speed the process, but the questions could still be used where this had not been done.

### **Managing the consultancy process: Entry, Staying the course and Endings**

Another aspect of process lies in the overlap between the management of self and task and is vital to anyone entering disaster as a helper. My experiential learning from all my cycles of action taught me the difficulties of **entering** a disaster community, of **establishing and maintaining** one's presence to conduct useful tasks in a volatile process and of **leaving** in a timely way once the task had been completed with local people empowered to continue the recovery work. I reflected on these experiences in great depth using different debriefing techniques and first-person methods such as the

Ladder of Inference and the Learning Pathways grid (see section B4). I now offer a brief summary of my findings.

#### **a. The Entry Process**

As I entered each new disaster and as I read and heard stories from other disaster workers, I realised how much the issue of entry shaped the effectiveness of the work that could be achieved and the stresses felt by disaster workers and consultants. Further, anyone offering help, even if invited to do so, had their entry complicated by accusations in the media and by some community leaders of being 'ambulance chasers', 'so-called experts rushing in and leaving too soon', and 'armies of counsellors converging on unsuspecting victims'. From my experiences, where there was a reasonable level of organisation, most disaster responders were present in their statutory or invited roles and only the most affected people were offered the help they needed. This is not just an issue for the caring professions. A solicitor in Newbury with proven expertise in acting for the Paddington train crash survivors told me of his frustration in knowing how to 'enter' the latest rail disaster to hit the town (the Berkshire rail crash, November 2004). Knowing how to offer his expertise from which many survivors could benefit without being unfairly accused of ambulance chasing was a constant issue for him. My entry as a volunteer facilitated his entry.

Every time news broke of new disasters, I developed the discipline of using real-time action inquiry to investigate the micro-processes involved in making a decision to respond. In addition I monitored media comments and the way the disaster was being interpreted. I generated knowledge about these processes by looking for common themes in stories of entry into disaster (Erikson, 1976, 1979; Raphael, 1986; Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1991, Newburn, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Barnard & Kane, 1995; Mead, 1996; Whittam & Newburn, 1993, Crumpton-Crook et al, 1997, & Alexander, 2002). I also gathered and analysed detailed accounts of entry from several associates involved in disasters such as the Hillsborough tragedy and Australian forest fires. My assumptions that problems I had encountered with entry were to do with my own personal failings were dispelled after talking to eminent specialists who had many stories of rejection of their offers of help by schools and communities. One man reported that as soon as he entered a room in Aberfan after the 1966 disaster, everyone began to speak Welsh. Erikson wrote of his entry to the Buffalo Creek Floods in the USA:

*"I came to Buffalo Creek a stranger ... not only was I unacquainted with the people and their ways but also I was a truly strange person from every point of view... Few of them knew or cared what sociologists do for a living... and there was nothing in my manner during the first few visits to dispel their very reasonable doubts as to whether I had anything of value to offer. .. They were asked to accept me as an expert on community life, and yet ... I was largely ignorant about the only forms of community that mattered to them."*

- Kai Erikson (1976)

I learnt that entry was not a finite event but a process. Once initial entry had been gained, many other entry processes to different parts of the community and to other agencies had to be negotiated. I therefore decided that since much of my work involved entry processes, I would adapt these to ensure assessments, information exchange and preventative education could be delivered quickly. When I compared entries in different roles, especially as a statutory community professional on the 'inside' of a disaster compared with an external consultant, I realised that the 'insider-outsider' dynamic was not the real issue. Even relatives close to victims and bereaved felt like outsiders. Being a 'victim' that took on the role of initiating and facilitating the Newbury Community Epidemiology study (Capewell, 1998c) immediately made me different from the others in the 'leukaemia community' and I realised that there were advantages in being the external consultant. The real dynamic seemed to be about the differences in power between victims and helpers and the process of giving and receiving help, as described in theories such as Reciprocity and Attribution theories (see D3, Bridging the Gap). I have discussed this issue at length in a paper, *'Parachutists, Voyeurs, Do-Gooders or Useful Partners in Recovery'* (Capewell, 2004a), drawing heavily from an e-mail dialogue with Marie Smyth from *'Cost of the Troubles Project'* (Smyth, 1998, 2004) an intensive action research project with communities in Northern Ireland. This dialogue developed from a chance encounter at the project's exhibition in Derry when I was working in Donegal after the Omagh bombing.

## **b. Staying the Course**

This part of the consultancy process involves two elements: first to walk alongside people through their chaos and, second, to maintain a presence long enough to complete the task of the consultancy.

First, I explored my ability to hear the horror of the disaster stories and walk alongside people while they find their way from the early shock to the long-term repercussions

such as claims for compensation and justice. Having had little direct experience of death and trauma until a year before the Hungerford shootings, I was curious about the capacity I discovered to do this. My enquiries led me to possible influences behind this: a stoical nature that at times overcame a natural fearfulness to reach beyond myself to act where others did not, for example, as a volunteer setting up a hostel for ex- Borstal trainees when I was twenty three. This had given me experience of dealing with a hostile local press and community over a prolonged period. Experiential training, for example the two year experiential humanistic psychology course in the mid-80's in Bath, taught me how to stay with challenging group processes and more than anything else prepared me for my disaster work. I gained cognitive understanding into constructive and destructive community processes from the work of Randall and Southgate, (1980). Learning from my Hungerford experiences and the illness and death of my daughter meant that I no longer feared entering other disaster affected communities or meeting bereaved parents, survivors and relatives.

Relationships with people traumatised by disaster are extraordinarily complex (Wilson & Lindy, 1994; van der Kolk 1994, et al 1996), because the *'interpersonal aspects of the trauma, such as mistrust, betrayal, dependency, love and hate tend to be replayed in the therapeutic dyad'*. (van der Kolk, 1996, preface). The complexity of these processes is multiplied in group and organisational settings, as shown in my stories, Story Box 2 and Part E.

The second aspect of the process was much harder to achieve as it entailed convincing community officials and leaders to agree to preventative measures at the transitional phase between the chaos of immediate aftermath and first visible signs of restoration of stability. This superficial restoration, often quite rapid and a natural response to being out of control, was too often mistaken for complete recovery. The public discourses that demanded people get back to normal made it hard for others to admit they were still suffering. Distress disappeared underground to fester and accumulate until it manifested in more complex forms later.

One of the biggest problems was the difficulty of planning a response while never knowing if, in the midst of many displaced anxieties, minds would be changed. I had to approach every piece of work as if it would never be continued. The story in Box 16 on the following page shows how quickly attitudes can change and my story 'Giving Myself justice' (Story Box 2, p.55) shows the volatility of many work situations. From each cycle of disaster action, I learnt that managers in control of resources find it hard to

believe the response should be a long-term process. Having information about the need was not enough. It required wisdom that could bear the non-linear nature of the trauma process plus vision and courage to persist against the derision of colleagues and act. To agree to long-term work required an act of faith.

## STORY BOX 16

### The Rapid Turnaround

The rapid changes in attitude about needs were seen clearly following a horrific train crash:

*"After the crash it was originally estimated that up to 130 people could be dead and overwhelmed by hopelessness, local councillors promised that support would be available with no efforts or money spared. The final death toll was 'only' 31, still high by UK disaster standards, with 259 injured, yet elected councillors blamed Local Authority Officers for exaggerating the impact and an 'over the top' response. The help-line and Drop-in Centre closed, two days after it had been refurbished by a local company. The number of injured was high but their names and the impact was not yet known. No one had any idea of the total number of indirect victims such as uninjured passengers and relatives. Our early involvement was intense and we were quickly given a desk and facilities and a lot of responsibility. It ended with equal speed and management inefficiency...*

*At the First Anniversary and during the Inquest, the true horror of the injuries and the extent of the impact began to emerge. One of the injured was so desperate for contact with other survivors, a survivors' group was formed. The repercussions of Inquiries and compensation went on for 5 more years and the long-term impact on some still goes on"*

- extracted from records and newspaper reports, 1999-2004

I partly resolved this dilemma by accepting that the role I usually played was short-term. I used images gained from a collaborative enquiry with colleagues. We likened our role to that of others that were more readily understood- to a paramedic doing first-aid before handing over the patient to specialists, or to a mid-wife facilitating the birth of the recovery process. My role was not to rescue the whole community but to empower local professionals and lay people to continue what I had started, with follow-up visits at key moments to consolidate learning and keep the process going. Enquiring into the process from different angles has also helped, as has comparing my experiences with those of others.



It was these experiences that motivated my third person action to disseminate information and encourage policy makers to put crisis management, including preparation as well as post-incident response, on the agenda and make it a legitimate part of normal general management. Advocacy work of this kind has been undertaken with senior managers of organisations and the Department of Education.

Other strategies that became important included:

- Being clear in my own minds about our role and the likely length of our involvement, and communicating this clearly to clients.
- Good contracting - vital, even in emergency situations in writing
- Insisting on an early meeting with all stakeholders who have an investment in the problem and solutions so that issues are confronted at the start, such as resistance, team problems ( not our business to solve), power games, ambivalence and predictable low points in the process, and exit strategies.
- Paying attention to the capacity of Managers for absorbing information while stressed.
- Integrating informal and formal review sessions with key personnel.
- Networking and keeping in touch with the 'grass-roots' in a community or agency and encouraging organisations to establish collaborative groups and networks to tap into information from all parts of the system. Information about continuing needs can also be gained from local media and newspapers; survivor group newsletters, oral and other archives and, increasingly, on-line networking.
- Mirroring (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 2001:218,224) - awareness of how I embodied my experience. *"It is through my body that I understand other people"* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962)

The rush after a disaster to employ people to solve problems immediately does however mean that time for good preparation and contracting is not always possible to achieve. Even where the people being served value the work and want more, their managers cannot always be persuaded of the necessity to do so for sustainable results to be achieved. An example is given in Story Box 17 on the following page.

**STORY BOX 17****LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY**

*"... In 6 intense days of work at a Middle Eastern airport with all kinds of staff involved in the recovery of wreckage and bodies after a plane crash, we assessed and 'defused' about 160 people in groups or individually, having had to adapt to a very different culture. Many staff told us with great emotion that our presence had been a symbol that someone cared. Their bosses reported great changes in their demeanour and were only too ready to have us back. As requested we presented our proposal to the Director and were told that a decision would be made. With everything looking good for clearance, nothing more was heard, in spite of strong representations made on our behalf by the people who had initially arranged and paid for the response. The uncertainty was particularly difficult, trying to work out whether the delay was a case of different cultural time scales. In the end I decided it was just plain rudeness by any cultural standards."*

- Taken from records, 2000

**c. Endings**

The difficulties of maintaining a presence naturally mean that the ending of a contract can also be an issue worthy of enquiry, not least because of the consequences for the management of mine and my team's reactions. Much of my practice has developed from my need to make sense of my 'endings' in my job after the Hungerford work. It helped to know that other disaster workers also had their work ended abruptly, and with much unfinished business. This suggested that this was a common feature of disaster work, only solvable by better preparation and education. These stories of distressing endings have come from all kinds of disaster workers, not just those working in psycho-social areas. An economist sought my help after his managers suddenly recalled him for a spurious reason from reconstruction work in Kosovo. He was angry and grief stricken that he had no chance to say goodbye to people who had worked with through distressing times.

Likewise, I was at a seminar when a group of BBC journalists who covered the Soham murders spoke of the pain of reporting the case and their pride that it was their information and action that had led directly to the killer's arrest. When they went to the local pub that evening, they were met with a notice saying 'members of the Press not welcome'. They perceived that they were no longer wanted now they had served their purpose, in spite of what they had achieved. Two years later they clearly still felt betrayed and bitter and could not make sense of what had happened. One cried at the

memories, the others were incensed and spoke with an emotional charge that I recognised from my own experiences of sudden and seemingly unfair rejection. I was able to help them make sense of their experiences, using my Trauma Process Map to explain the idiosyncrasies of post-trauma community dynamics.

Having studied my own 'leavings', I have found these types of endings:

- Ill-defined or left in abeyance
- Endings resulting from poor management, inefficiency and suspected sabotage by people with other interests.
- Ending of one contract, but with the creation of new ones with different clients in the same disaster.
- Endings after review and learning sessions when the work has been completed
- Endings leading to other spin-offs to the next level of systemic change, such as the writing of general guidelines for national agencies after the Omagh bomb (Capewell, 2000a).

However, as many victims will say, "*disaster never ends*" and my contact has continued over many years up to the present with survivors and grass-roots staff from several disasters, notably Hungerford, Lockerbie, Hillsborough, Dunblane and Omagh, as we continue our own ad hoc collaborative enquiries into the events that changed our lives.

## THE DEFINABLE TASKS OF DISASTER RESPONSE

The need to market my business made me define the tasks of disaster response that I most used, even if I adapted them for specific situations. A menu of actual post-trauma methods is given in Appendix II. My key task is to offer methods that help people become more aware of the significance and impact of the disaster on all channels of their being, and their appraisals of their situation. I do this in order to help them choose their journey forward with more information, support and ideas. In other words I want to encourage them to become good first-person, then second-person enquirers by:

- creating quality conversations that raise people's awareness of their disaster experience, alone or with others
- creating safe structures, with individuals or groups, in which people can gain control over their situation, process their reactions and decide how to move forward.

These tasks apply both to victims/survivors and their helpers - disaster managers and staff in organisations either offering services or with a duty of care towards them. I will either seek to create these conversations and structures myself or refer to others who can. I shall now outline some of the key strategies that I created or adapted which run through all my response work.

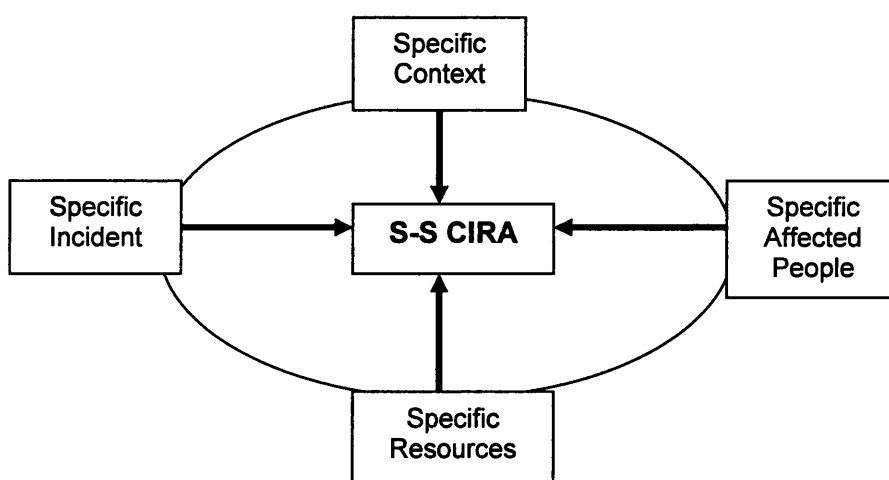
### **TASK A: ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND NEED**

**Method A1: Assessing the overall scale and nature of the response - A personal framework, S-S. CIRA (Site-Specific Critical Incident Review and Action).**

Though every situation I worked in had common themes, no two situations were the same each having distinctive features and significance only explainable once the details were known. This observation informed my belief that the impact of disaster was a product of the relationship of an external event and the subjective experience of it. I gradually built up my own procedures for ensuring local details were understood before decisions were made about the response. I can apply these to smaller incidents in schools and workplaces as well as major disasters. It ensures that off-the-shelf trauma methods are not applied before the needs have been understood.

I decided to call my strategy **Site-Specific Critical Incident Review and Action (S-S. CIRA)** (Diag. 12 below).

#### **DIAG. 12: SITE-SPECIFIC CRITICAL INCIDENT REVIEW AND ACTION**



I borrowed the 'Site –Specific' concept from choreography where the dance grows out of a specific setting, such as a beach or garden. My disaster response strategy would likewise grow from the very specific set of circumstances of each disaster, relating to

the specific features of the incident, the site, the resources available, the time, the context and the specific characteristics of all the different people involved. My aim was to help people **review** their specific situations from which their plans for **action** would form. This was also congruent with an action research approach. This model formalised what I had learnt when I created a response to Hungerford without any specific disaster knowledge: that a well prepared mind, a questioning approach and an ability to listen at many levels provides a solid foundation for a response which is collaborative and responsive to the local conditions.

This strategy ensures that all elements of the disaster are considered. I use the same **CIRA** acronym for these elements – **C**ontext, **I**ncident, **R**esources available and the **A**ffected community before decisions are made about how to proceed. Even if the community and resources are known before the disaster, they have to be reviewed again in the aftermath when everything could be changed. As soon as I am approached to assist with an incident, I begin to assess all these aspects of the disaster. I elicit information from as many sources as possible, such as local contacts, the national and local media reports (even if inaccurate they tell me a great deal about perceptions and local issues) and, increasingly, the internet. Methods for assessing the circles of vulnerability and resilience in the affected community are described in point 2 below.

The model considers the four principle variables found in any helping situation in a disaster or part of a disaster, and how they interrelate. The variables are:

### Context

The political, social, cultural and economic context of the incident and those involved influence the significance of the impact on different people and likely complications. The context will also influence the boundaries of the response and the role of helpers. Context questions include: *“Has the event hit a community, an organisation, or special community such as a school? What is your role and status? Who is in charge, who has power? Are you working in a planned and prepared context, or do responses have to be created spontaneously? What are the political consequences of offering help?”* The context will also affect and be affected by the actions and interpretations of the media.

### Incident

The actual traumatic incident is assessed in terms of its scale, nature, significance and the details which define its uniqueness. The kind of questions that will elicit answers

include, *"Is it an incident that has directly hit a community, nation or is it more separate, with victims drawn from a wider area? Is it the result of accident or intent? Is it a criminal or political act; technological; or environmental, with or without elements of human mismanagement? Are the perpetrators internal or external to the community? Is it a single incident, a series of incidents, on-going or complex? What is its significance and meaning to individuals, groups, and communities? What is the nature of threatening and shocking sensory images and stimuli that have the potential to cause traumatic reactions – both during the incident and in the aftermath?"*

### Resource

Disasters have to make use of the human resource available. Adapting the existing methods of helpers is preferable to applying methods requiring new training. Questions include: *"Who is available to offer support? What are they trained to do? How adaptable are they to new conditions? What resources are available? How sophisticated are existing services in the area? What external services are available and acceptable? How will agencies co-operate? Knowing how the resource is to be organised is also important - Is it a centralised, authoritarian 'control and command' approach? Are different professional and voluntary agencies, each with their different management lines and operational styles, having to work under rigidly defined pre-determined plans that may be impossible to operate (Drabek, 1997, 1986, Drabek & McEntire, 2002)? Is there flexibility with agencies keeping their own identities while working in co-operation towards a common goal (Hills, 1994)?"* My style works best in a community orientated response with decisive but flexible leader who can set the procedures in motion and allow them to interact and adjust to each other, doing what each does best.

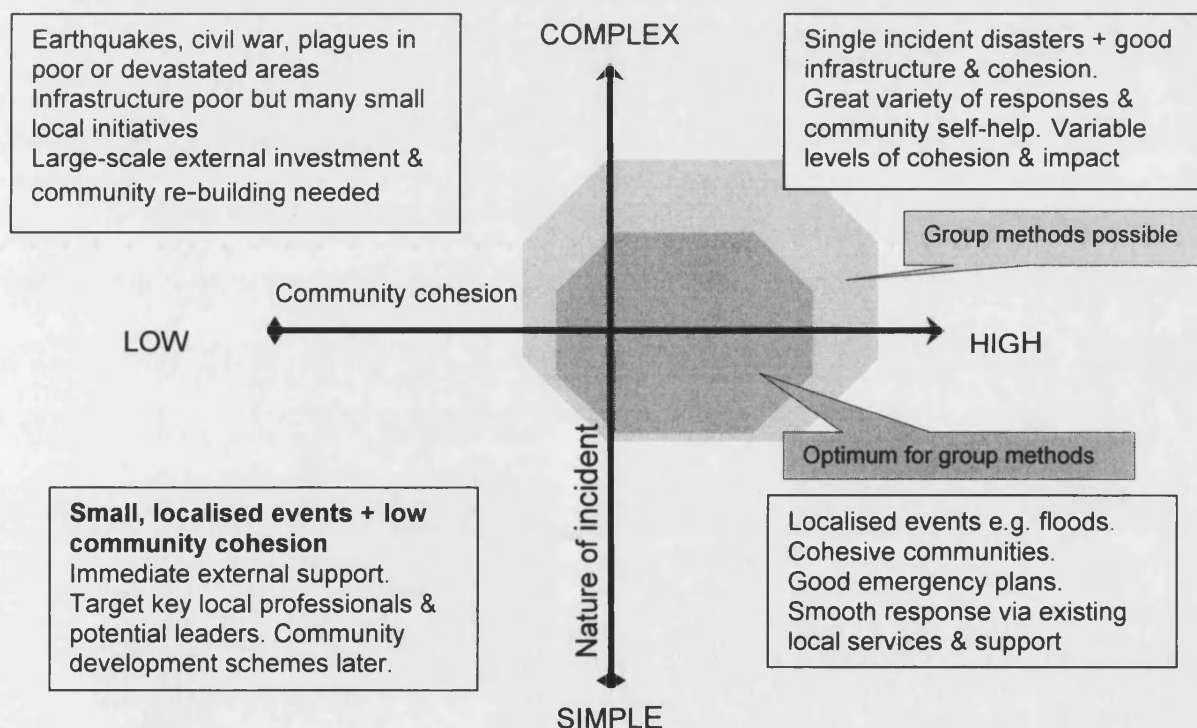
### Affected community

The questions that need to be asked to assess the extent and nature of the affected community are of the kind, *"What are the characteristics of the people involved and the dynamics in the community? What is the significance of the incident to them? What are the 'circles of vulnerability'? How can tentative assessments be made of their vulnerability and resilience to stress reactions - in terms of the risks from exposure to the incident, the support available to them, their history and current situation - as individuals and as members of various groups and communities. Whose needs might be denied and for what reasons? Who are the leaders and who do they represent? Which groups might be ignored? What are the appropriate means for reaching all parts of the community?"*

A vital element of recovery is the discovery of a person's or community's unique ability to deal creatively with chaos. There will always be limits to what we know and have available. The final choices made about the journey after traumatic events and its repercussions must rest with the person or community concerned, but we can ensure they have the best information, support and ideas available.

In general the less organised the situation and the more complex the incident and its significance, the greater the range of support and follow-up needed. The support needs to attend to all levels - individual, group through to community and organisational systems. It also needs to be holistic with interactions between educational, social, spiritual and medical support. As a simple means of assessing the range and level of response needed, rather than repeating the same solutions for every event regardless of scale, I produced the grid below. Diagram 13 below shows the version devised for community disaster response.

**DIAG. 13. SCALE OF RESPONSE GRID: COMMUNITY DISASTER**



In the diagram, the appropriate range of responses is given for each segment. The nature of the response is determined by two axes – the level of cohesion of a group or community and the complexity of an incident. An incident is deemed to be complex if it

is horrific, extreme, unexpected, with multiple loss and multiple components and if the timing, place, or meaning makes it particularly significant to the unit affected. The shaded areas have been added because group methods are often inappropriately applied to every situation. Conditions for a formal group or team 'debriefing' of their experience are at their optimum in incidents which are neither so simple that it is unnecessary nor so complex that a group cannot cope. A sufficient level of cohesion is required for the group to co-operate, have a common experience and be well supported with opportunities for follow-up (Everley & Mitchell, 1997, 2000).

### **Method A2: Assessing Circles of Vulnerability (Ripples of Impact)**

A further assessment is needed of the '**Circles of Vulnerability**' (Ayalon, 1993) to assess the ripples of the impact and bring some order into the chaos. The levels of risk to reaction are assessed according to the geographical, social and psychological proximity to the event, thus needs can be differentiated and a strategy of meeting them designed. This prevents premature, and usually limited, solutions being applied to all regardless of risk. It also means that people who are not showing visible reactions are not ignored. With the use of good quality dialogue, such tasks can be adapted to begin the recovery work in a discreet manner which carries no stigma.

To help this process, I developed a 'triage' system to work out tentative circles of vulnerability for use in schools. In the Docklands school where I first used it directly, I noticed how it reduced the feelings of helplessness in teachers and gave them a simple practical task which meant they systematically considered the impact on every pupil, rather than only focussing on those with visible, often 'inconvenient' reactions:

*"When asked which pupils were affected, class teachers would give a few names - usually the ones with physically injured relatives and those who cried a lot (usually girls). However, when asked to take a copy of their class register and systematically assess vulnerability according to the criteria given to them, every child, present or absent had to be considered and a different picture emerged. Assessments were reviewed as more information emerged from using other class based methods. The staff then realised how many more children had been affected by the bomb than first imagined. Having the class lists also provided a concrete focus for discussion which made working with resistant staff easier."*

—Extract from records, 1996



This model and triage method first gave my team a simple way of beginning our own assessment of needs and thus became a useful enquiry to inform action for ourselves in collaboration with managers, as follows:

- Before arrival, I begin to map likely circles of vulnerability from the information I have been given or can glean from the media.
- As soon as I arrive in the area, I pick up more information using any means possible – from local paper headlines, overheard remarks to ad hoc conversations with any conversations my colleagues and I can stimulate.
- On entering the organisation my colleagues and I chat spontaneously, but with an underlying purpose, to receptionists, caretakers and whoever we meet in passing.
- I use the joint information gathered as a basis for planning the response, before repeating the exercise as new information emerges.

As my experience grew I collected other ways that non-specialists could use for tentatively assessing circles of vulnerability. The methods included:

- **Mapping the key sites of the incident (Geographical vulnerability)**

This idea came from the research by William Parry Jones (lecture, 1992) on compensation claimants in Lockerbie. Highest levels of trauma were found near the key sites of activity in the event and aftermath.

- **Mapping where the dead lived and injured live (Social vulnerability)**

This gives clues to which families may be more affected or involved in giving support to bereaved families, and which families may feel excluded because they live far away.

- **Plot known family and friendship links of the dead (Social vulnerability)**

This helps a school or workplace build up a picture of who may be affected and it shows up less obvious links between people in different schools and age groups.

- **Checklist of those with existing vulnerabilities (Psychological vulnerability)**

Individuals and families with existing mental health problems, those known to have previously experienced traumas or losses, or who identify by age, sex, situation etc. (Janis, 1971)

- **Early preventative work and 'being around'**

Formal and informal conversations provide information, especially where exposure is not obvious. More general fears and problems in the wider population may be exposed.

- **Creative methods**

Drawings, writing and other creative work may give clues about the degree of impact, especially on children, and can be used to open a dialogue with them

Having people involved in a range of methods will help build a picture that can be checked out at different stages after the incident. It is a form of **collaborative assessment** similar to that described by Luna in her work in Los Angeles (Tortorici Luna, 1992, 2002 and personal communications) which is informed by participative action research and the ideas of Paolo Freire (1970).

## **TASK B: POST-TRAUMA PROCESSING OF THE EXPERIENCE**

When I was setting up my business in 1990, I used the methods of group facilitation learnt in various trainings to help people process their experiences. It was a general, flexible process with no particular name for its application to trauma (Capewell, 1997, 1999). I realised that I had to be more precise when a method known as critical incident stress debriefing (CISD, see Appendix III), (Mitchell 1988; Mitchell & Bray, 1990), rapidly spread throughout the world as the post-trauma method of preference (Herrick, 1993; Richards, 1994). Unfortunately, it was not always implemented within a well planned critical incident stress management (CISM) programme as it should have been. I felt pushed by this movement to offer CISD as organisations came to believe that this was what crisis response actually was. In 1995, the article mentioned in A2 appeared in the British Medical Journal (Raphael et al, 1995) attacking Mitchell's methods. Further attacks followed with increasing venom from certain professionals who appeared to be intent on destroying it (Bisson et al, 1997; Kennardy et al, 1996; Gist, 1998). All these research studies had applied a misrepresentation of the CISD method to people (such as physically injured, Bisson et al, 1997) and situations for which it was never designed (such as child birth, Lavender et al, 1998; Small et al, 2000) and were also used in attempts to draw conclusions from meta-analyses of them (van Emmerick et al, 2002; Wessely et al, 1999, Rose et al, 2002).

I had never used Mitchell's methods but mine were not that different, being guided by similar principles and was caught in a dilemma. The process of defending my own preferred method involved dissociating myself from bad practice in Mitchell's methods, but also defending the basic principles and proper implementation of his CISM/D programmes. The media reports (Coghlan, 2003) that distorted and misrepresented the debriefing process, and, quite unfairly, counselling in general (Hodson, 2003), began to affect the community based aspects of disaster work in which I was involved, since the

reports were often used to suggest that no help at all of any kind should be given to victims immediately after a tragedy. Fearing a return to the days of little post-disaster action, I undertook a prolonged enquiry into the roots of this debate (Capewell, 2004a). First, I was drawn in personally through contacts in Australia and an invitation to a conference in Western Australia in 1996 where I experienced the personal nature of the controversy and posed the question, "*What is this really about?*" I studied many lectures, discussions and research studies for (see papers under Mitchell, Flannery, Everley, Dyregrov, Robinson, Chemtob et al, 1997; Turnbull et al, 1997) and against the method (Deahl et al, 1994; Hobbs et al, 1996; Kennardy et al, 1996; Bisson et al, 1997; Avery & Ørner, 1998; Kennardy 1998, 2000; Mayou et al, 2000; Small et al, 2000; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Rick & Briner, 2000; Rose et al, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003; McNally et, 2003). I took part in a consultation and conference instigated by the British Psychological Society about the method (BPS, 2002) which attempted to give a more balanced view of debriefing, as did other papers (Robinson & Mitchell, 1995; Ursano et al, 2000; Richards, 2001; Irving, 2001) and Deahl, who moved sides to defend debriefing in his later papers (2000, 2002). My awareness of different research paradigms led me to conclude that people were arguing from very different, but rarely stated, perspectives, roles and aims. Such basic concepts did not seem to be addressed by either side of the debate. I also concluded that the debate was as much personal and political, in terms of professional jealousies and territories, as scientific.

The article I produced is too detailed for inclusion here but on the day it was completed, I was asked for help by colleagues in Croatia who had to present a paper in reply to one of the fiercest opponents of debriefing. They were professionals who worked mainly in schools and found the proper practice of CISM extremely beneficial, as most practitioners do, and who feared their work would be jeopardised. My document found an immediate and effective use there and in other places since. Mainly, it provides the cognitive framing for people to disentangle the complexities of the debate and gives them confidence to pursue the development of their own interpretations of debriefing. It also had the capacity to make people think differently and became a form of third-person enquiry.

In the meantime, I had been developing my own form of debriefing suited to the unplanned, volatile situations I usually worked with. I first reflected on the forms of 'debriefing' I had developed myself with staff at Hungerford, then compared this with my first practical introduction to Mitchell's debriefing in 1989. I collected other experiences in different situations and types of disaster, and also used my 'debriefing'

work in commercial companies for convergent cycles of action and reflection (in one company, I have undertaken nearly sixty incident responses). Crisis management procedures were rarely in place and Mitchell's procedure could not therefore be used. I searched for other methods and found that Ayalon's '**Empowerment model**' (Gal et al, 1996) suited both my style of facilitation and unpredictable circumstances. This model focussed on questions through which participants built up their own maps of what was helping and not helping them. I also studied the adaptations of the Mitchell method called '**Critical Incident Processing and Recovery**' (CIPR) made by Galliano and Lahad that included individual assessments in the group version (Galliano, 2000) and versions for children (Lahad 2002).

My model uses a management strategy that involves all affected directly in an incident as well as their managers and colleagues who will influence their recovery. I apply the assessment techniques described earlier and interview every person individually before deciding on the next steps, but for incidents affecting a group, I aim eventually to bring them all together in some way. How I conduct the session depends on my assessment of the situation. With young adults I use active participative mapping, with children I use creative, story making methods and for others purely verbal dialogue. This, with a follow-up session, forms a base from which self-help or specialist 1:1 help can proceed.

### **TASK C: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND INCREASING CHOICES**

Finally, I want to mention two concepts that I use throughout all the tasks I undertake, whether it be a short ad hoc conversation, a formal group meeting, or a consultancy with a manager. They are both simple enough for working in highly stressful situations and give purpose and a structure to my conversations, turning them into opportunities for offering of basic but high quality support.

#### **Method C1. Kfir's crisis intervention model (Kfir, 1989)**

In this model, every interaction involves an exchange of information, support and alternative ideas (about ways of coping and appraising the event). The model is practical and matches the real experience of being in the field in encounters with real people, as well as encouraging an action inquiry approach. It reduces anxiety and focuses energy on the immediate needs for survival in the immediate future

This simple model improved the quality of my attention from mere listening to stories for gaining information to active engagement for encouraging reflection, however small, and to stimulate the realisation that things can be different. Adding the questions: '*What CAN you do?*', '*What can YOU do?*' '*Who else can help you?*' and '*Is there anything*

*you would like from me now?*' mobilised action further. The pattern of these questions mirrors the appraisals made by victims during a disaster and thus countered negative appraisals of helplessness made (van der Kolk, 2002) at that time by giving important messages:

- it was possible to move out of 'stuck' positions of thought, feeling and behaviour
- the responsibility for action lay with the person themselves, indicating that they were in fact capable of finding their own solution
- they did not have to do this alone
- I, the helper, could be used as a resource now, but only if they wanted it and in the way they specified. It also relieved me of being put on a pedestal and being expected to do the impossible.

The story in Story Box 18 is an example of the transformative power of this kind of dialogue.

### **Story Box 18**

#### **Transformation through Dialogue**

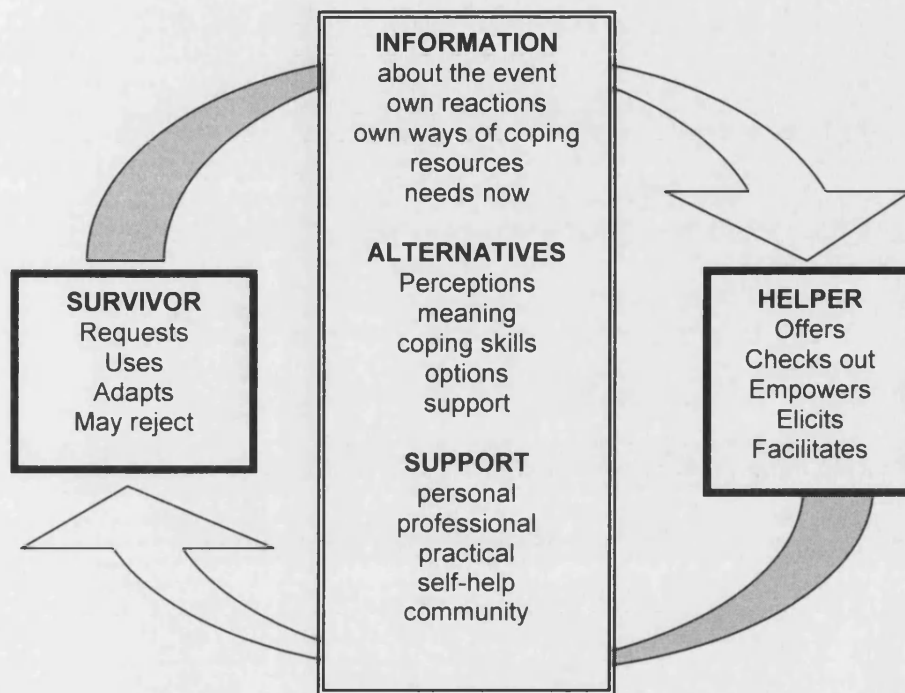
*"In a post-disaster class session in a school, use had been made of the children's dialogue skills, already taught in school. Just after the session, Razia, whose father had been badly injured and was still in a coma, came into her class for the first time since the bombing. She was questioned by one of her friends who asked what few adults would have dared to ask a child: 'And what would you do if your Daddy died?' This challenged Razia to confront the real fear facing her, facilitating the next step to thinking about how she would deal with her worst dread. My colleague, Lilian, was able to move in and support the dialogue between the two girls. Thus, Razia identified the real problems facing her and the real loss felt when her father brushed her away unconsciously when she visited him. Using the question, 'What CAN your do?', Razia, was able to think through ideas for keeping a connection with her father whether he died or whether he came out of the coma. The change in her demeanour was remarkable - the sorrowful little girl with sad eyes was transformed into a girl with bright eyes and a big smile. As we left the school for the last time, she came running over to Lilian, flung her arms round her and said 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.'"*

-Taken from my records, 1996.

All of these messages are important for traumatised people who have characteristically been rendered helpless and are often fearful of change, isolated and mistrustful of self and others. The diagram I devised to communicate this idea is shown overleaf (Diag.

### Diag. 14: IMMEDIATE SUPPORT AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

IN ANY CONVERSATION  
AN EXCHANGE IS NEEDED OF  
INFORMATION, SUPPORT, ALTERNATIVES



#### A SIMPLE CRISIS INTERVENTION FORMAT:

Make the most of every minute you have. Aim to mobilise the person into taking the next step in their thinking, feeling or action. If they are over-whelmed in one channel, help them switch to another (e.g. feeling to activity). In every inter-action the aim is:

- to validate their experience & give permission to own it and seek help
- to help the person make sense of what has happened and how they are coping
- to help you assess needs for this client and for the wider disaster response
- to create a partnership to support the person to become active 'agents of recovery.'

### Method C2: Lahad's Multi-dimensional coping model (Lahad, 1992, 1993)

I learnt this method from Lahad and then developed it further to meet my needs. When producing material in the Docklands bomb for use with young people, I coined a different acronym to avoid technical terms such as affect and cognitive, as shown in the diagram 15 below.

<b>Diag. 15: <u>The Multi-Modal Coping Model</u></b>	
<u>Lahad's version</u>	<u>Capewell's adaptation</u>
<u>BASIC-Ph</u>	<u>BE FIT &amp; Phys</u>
<b>B</b> eliefs and values	<b>B</b> eliefs and values
<b>A</b> ffect	<b>E</b> motion
<b>S</b> ocial and organisational	<b>F</b> amily, Friends, Social role
<b>C</b> ognition reality and knowledge	<b>T</b> hinking
<b>P</b> hysical – body & environment	<b>P</b> hysical – body & environment

The uses I have discovered can be summarised as follows:

- **As a self-assessment method** as described in section B3
- **As a means of identifying learning or coping styles** of an individual in need of support.
- **To improve choice about how a coping style is used.** People in distress will often repeat the phrase – 'nothing helps' or 'there's nothing I /anyone can do' while at the same time giving evidence that they are actually using several coping strategies.
- **To improve the focus and quality of my attention.** The model requires close attention to what is and is not being said, how it is being presented, including the context, patterns, metaphor, content and links.
- **Creating stories of coping.** More advanced applications include the creative versions, such as 6-piece story-making (Lahad, 1992, 1993), based on the Jungian concepts of the unconscious and archetypes (von Franz, 1987).
- **A creative tool for planning activity programmes** Crisis response teams in schools use the model to develop a curriculum for building coping skills before an incident or for promoting healthy coping after one has happened, ensuring all coping channels are covered.

- **As a training method.** For checking out how people are faring through a course, teaching self-care and, in its story-making forms, as a safe way of dealing with personal issues and identifying vulnerabilities and strengths.
- **As a research tool.** The model has been used for research by Lahad et al (1993) and in research into the assessment of personality disorder in the UK (Dent-Brown, 2003). I regard it as a very useful action research method for co-researching coping styles in groups and with individuals.
- **To encourage carers to communicate with children, and children with each other,** as this story in Story Box 19 illustrates:

### STORY BOX 19

#### ENQUIRY & TRANSFORMATION IN THE PLAYGROUND

*"A popular PE master of a preparatory school hanged himself prior to a court appearance for sexual abuse allegations. I had worked in a team of three with the staff, parents and pupils for several days. One break-time, I was in the playground when a 7 year old boy asked to see the puppets he saw in my bag and, knowing he had been very upset by the death, I used the opportunity to chat to him using the puppets. He was a child who loved scientific facts and figures but had few ideas about coping with emotions. When I tried to encourage him to use his imagination, he looked at me blankly, but another boy came up and spontaneously took the puppets and began making up a story. He demonstrated a different way of expressing and dealing with feelings to the first boy. It was only a glimpse but he caught the spirit of the magic of imagination and his whole demeanour changed as he began to relax and smile for the first time. I was able to talk to the boy's father later and encourage him to open up this new channel of expression"*

- Taken from my records, 1998



## D 4

### **THE MANAGEMENT OF CONTEXT**

The fact that my business has been conducted in many different contexts and organisation has meant convergent cycles of action research have been possible. I could monitor subtle changes in my experience and practical actions according to the context and how far the different contexts affected the impact of an incident and recovery. I shall give a summary of what I have found from personal reflection, an analysis of my records, the subtle changes in practice made by trial and error, and various forms of second person enquiry.

#### **Context A: WORKPLACES**

The workplace context of trauma response covers a wide range of situations from responses to staff affected by incidents such as armed robberies in the work-place to responses to staff suffering primary or vicarious trauma because their jobs deal with rescue, recovery or management of traumatised people. I realised this range and the difference context made when researching a chapter about organisational responses to loss, grief and trauma in children (Capewell, 1996c). I had to cover the range of organisations from children's hospice staff dealing with trauma continually to schools where responses to incidents are rare. Here I shall concentrate on incidents affecting staff teams in companies not engaged in rescue or recovery work, though even here, the range of organisational cultures and staff teams is wide. My learning is drawn from my principle experience with retail outlets, such as supermarkets, off-licence stores and fast-food outlets and with incidents such as armed robberies, in-store customer deaths (drug-related deaths, murders, suicides), riots and involvement in major disasters. I have found that context is a contributing influence in the following ways:

- The recovery must be seen as a process not a one-off event, requiring management strategies and varied post-trauma options (Capewell, 1993c; Williams, 1993; Richards, 1994, 2001)
- The company and staff have access to insurance and company health schemes and this means that money is available for recovery work. Staff are involved in a major community disaster may also have access to such schemes and thus they can make an important contribution to the creation of a healthy recovery community and relieve some of the burden from statutory services.

- Companies can sometimes be guilty of providing a response in a minimal and tokenistic manner for the main purpose of preventing compensation claims. Staff members are left without the depth of support they need and may feel, often because of suggestions made by managers, that it is their fault if they do not recover in a few days.
- The impact on individuals can be made far worse by bad management practice, inaction or negative action. Thus the response should not be conducted at 'arms length' of normal management systems. Managers need to be involved in the pre-trauma planning and post-trauma recovery process. Recovery can be delayed if there is no recognition from the Company and line managers that the person suffered in the service of the organisation.
- Incidents affecting a team need a response involving the whole team, individually and, if appropriate, in groups, regardless of differences in impact. This means the whole team can support each other and team problems can be reduced.
- The impact of trauma on the work-place and the differences and divisions created between people is a microcosm of the impact on larger communities and is thus a useful context for learning, training and maintenance of skills.

#### **Context B: SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATION AGENCIES.**

Schools mirror community post-disaster processes even more than workplaces and provide a complex set of circumstances that have to be considered when planning a post-trauma response. Individual staff, of course, may be victims/survivors, witnesses, rescuers and/or bereaved in their own right. They are also paid employees with rights to care and attention, but they also in turn have a duty of care to their pupils, making their own personal processing of a traumatic event even more crucial. I have had to work with several Head teachers who were so traumatised that they were not in a healthy position to make good decisions for anyone. For example, one school decided not to say anything to children about a teacher's suicide and their decision to send letters home to parents instead meant they lost control of the information giving and reactions – many letters were lost or opened by the children first. Stress in the leader can cause more stress for the staff, a subject studied extensively by Lahad (1988a). Examples of this are given in Story Box 20 overleaf. In addition the issue of trauma, death and children carries many taboos, myths and sensitivities that make inaction and lack of preparation common in schools.

**STORY BOX 20****(a) THE 'ABSENT' HEAD TEACHER**

*"A Junior school head teacher could not be found when I arrived to work with her staff after the suicide of the Reception class teacher. Eventually, she came in with a long list of issues that she wanted me to cover in an hour - bullying, bereavement, divorce and many others except the suicide of their colleague. After a quick negotiation, I began the task I was appointed to do by the Head of the whole school. I soon discovered every staff member had past and recent experience of suicide or traumatic death. The Junior School Head maintained a determined silence throughout, leaving quickly at the end 'because she had to phone the vet'. It was clear that her personal issues were preventing other concerns in the staff team from being aired and resolved. Just before the next session, her Deputy confided in me that she had been upset by the hurtful remarks made to her by the Head. It was made more difficult because the Head was not attending meetings. We never did get to the reason for her resistance, but other silences were broken in the staff team after angry explosions from the supply teacher, the replacement for the dead teacher. Her horrendous stories about abuse and suicide threats in her family explained her reluctance to deal with the children's questions and reactions. Hers was obviously an inappropriate appointment for this difficult job" - Taken from my records, 1991*

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**(b) STRESS CREATED BY STRESS**

*"A young local car-racer crashed and killed 6 children, 3 of them pupils at a Junior school. The Head had been to every funeral and was in a highly aroused state, causing further mayhem in the school. Her relationship with her staff team, managers and the community were already poor and school psychologists were also having problems with her and they had to work in a space in the corridor. She had incorrectly told the staff team I was giving a relaxation session. When I arrived, a small group of staff insisted that the staff teddy bear sat in the group and then tried to sabotage the meeting. The school suffered a sequence of stresses after the accident. It was broken into every night after the accident (the culprits turned out to be pupils); the over-stressed secretary took sick leave, and the school was invaded by rats. After several visits to the school, I discovered that the Head had herself experienced several traumatic incidents in her life and a few months before the accident her latest partner had died traumatically. After a term she took long-term leave. - Taken from my records, 1992.*

My conclusions about working in the context of education have been drawn not only from my experience of pioneering this work in UK schools, but also from my conversations and studies in different parts of the world such as Israel, Australasia and New York and with many people in this country (Capewell, 1994a, 1996c). The major influences on me have been the contacts with Kendall Johnson (1989/98, 1993), Ofra Ayalon, Mooli Lahad and colleagues (see CSPC volumes, I-V and papers under their names), Åtle Dyregrov (1989, 1991) and Louise Rowling (1994, 1995, 2003) in Australia. I have also drawn on these contacts in my third-person enquiries into how this sensitive subject can be disseminated and implemented in my submissions to the English Department of Education (Capewell, 2001). I gathered key learning statements from them and others around the world that illustrated the benefits of policy makers who have taken a proactive stance in implementing school crisis management. I also gained a great deal of information into the conditions needed for the point of take-off to be reached and the process of implementation in schools and systems by mapping the processes with key initiators in New York and three Australian states.

Major learning points included:

- The health of children is a crucial factor in the health of families and therefore is key to the long-term health and recovery of the whole community.
- Teachers and other education staff are in a good position to become 'agents of recovery' and can give both strategic and specific support to children and families.
- Different kinds of support and services can be channelled through the usual roles of the school. In particular, help can be given to indirectly affected children through normal school and class activities in a non-stigmatising manner. They are in turn in a better position to support, or at least not make matters worse for, directly affected children.
- The existing structures and routines in schools mean that offering support through them is more possible than in less contained community settings.
- Some aspects of schools may militate against them taking on a recovery role, not least the belief that it interferes with the school's core tasks.
- The school's involvement is legitimised through the impact of disaster on behaviour and the ability to learn. Inaction merely stores up problems for the future, especially in the staff team (Capewell, 1993, 1994a, b, c, Capewell & Beattie, 1996, Johnson, 1989, Lahad, 1988a).
- Schools as a workplace are very prescribed and inflexible. Thus it is difficult to make time for processing the reactions of managers and staff and caring for affected staff

without disrupting the school routines, the very structures that provide safety for children. (Rowling, 1994, 1995). Schools are not a good environment for the recovery of traumatised staff. A secondary school teacher who was traumatised, but physically uninjured in a rail crash returned to work immediately but within a few days could not cope in such a stressful job. She felt guilty about taking sick-leave, especially as two pupils in the same crash were seen to be 'fine'. The lack of understanding by colleagues was adding to her distress. Even when they began to understand they it hard to know how best to help as they tried to guess what was needed rather than checking things out first with the survivor.

- Resistance in schools and Education systems to this subject has been high, regardless of country and culture (Johnson, 1989, 1998; Lahad, 1988b; Fisher et al 1993). Central policies and resources are usually required for general take-up of school crisis planning and response, often achieved only after a major incident (e.g. the Ash Wednesday Fires in Victoria State Department of Education; the Scud missile attacks in Israel; September 11th USA attacks in the English Department of Education). Interviews with teachers in Israel showed how much more straightforward the work had become once it had been made an accepted part of normal school management by the Ministry of Education. As an interviewee told me in 1996, *"It took a long time for systems to be developed, but now we work on three levels –national, city and school"*
- Placing the subject in an existing school policy framework, such as 'Promoting a Healthy School (Rowling, 1995, 2003) can help reduce resistance.

The learning points above mainly involve systemic issues requiring changes in attitude and policies from politicians, executives, school Governors and Head teachers. These people are all vital to the process of bridging the gap between the needs of communities and expert help and it for this reason my work is focussed on systemic issues. I rarely work directly with children, the exceptions being the Docklands response (Story Box 18) and one part of the Omagh work (described in section E3), so I made the decision not to include this aspect of my work in this thesis. However, I cannot work through teachers, managers and policy makers without understanding the impact of trauma on children (Wraith, 1988; Wraith & Gordon, 1987b; Campion, 1998; Pynoos & Nader, 1988, 1993) or having a wide repertoire of methods for working with children (Wraith, 1997, 2000; Yule, 2001). When I began my business in 1990, there was little literature on these issues apart from the pioneering books for schools by Barbara Ward (1987, 1989), the books of drama-therapists (Gersie, 1991) and my early mentors (Ayalon, 1988; Johnson 1989) who taught me as I worked with them.

### Context C: COMMUNITY.

The community or wider social context of disaster is a constant thread throughout my work. Much of my disaster experience has occurred in community settings and the community cannot be divorced from the meaning given to the disaster, the way its impact is handled and the interactions between community and individuals that influence the speed and nature of adjustment and recovery. As Alfred Adler stated:

*"Man is a social being. The human being and all his capabilities and forms of expression are inseparably linked to the existence of others, just as he is linked to cosmic facts and to the demands of this earth."*

- Adler, 1924

Community is a term with messy boundaries. It can mean the geographical community where the disaster takes place (Hungerford, Aberfan); the wider, often very dispersed, community of people directly and indirectly affected by a disaster; or a specific community such as a school, organisation or group, such as the gay community targeted by the London Soho bombing in 1999. The definitions themselves can lead to problems. For example the Hungerford massacre and Omagh bomb affected people from the district around and further away who often complained of being given less attention than people in the town where the incidents occurred. When I refer to community, I mean any wider group of people linked together by having some kind of relationship to the disaster itself and the recovery process. It is of course important to establish the exact nature of the community affected by each new incident, since working with a compact community directly struck by a disaster or attacked by a perpetrator has different implications from working with communities hit by an event in which unconnected people from far flung home communities were involved (as in transport disasters). I classified them as **Community Disasters** (e.g. Aberfan, 1966; **Intrusive Disasters** (such as the Marchioness ferry disaster, 1989, and the Paddington train crash, 1999) and **Complex Disasters** (such as in Lockerbie, 1988), where the town was directly hit, but the plane carried people from around the world. Other classifications and sub-classifications could be made according to the political or symbolic significance of an event at a national or international level, duration and frequency, and whether the impact was predominantly physical, social, psychological or economic.

The tacit knowing I gained from my early disaster work about the dynamics of post-disaster communities alerted me to the problems created if they were not managed well. For example, the disaster and its repercussions exaggerated existing differences within and between groups and the resulting splits were then the cause of further fragmentation. Many of my ideas resonated with my findings in Melbourne, with Rob Gordon (Gordon, 1989) in particular where there was a strong tradition of attending to community aspects of disaster. I produced a series of diagrams to bring my tacit, practical and propositional knowledge together into a communicable form (Capewell, 2003b). I use these myself to understand community dynamics but they are still too complex for inclusion here and I continue to work on their development.

### **The importance of the community dimension**

The importance of dealing with the impact of disaster on communities was highlighted in the remarkable sociological study by Kai Erikson about the impact of the human-induced floods at Buffalo Creek (Erikson, 1976, 1979). He found that the trauma was not just about the threat to life and the events of the disaster itself, but also, and in some cases to a greater extent, due to the loss of communality and the attachment to place. This loss was caused by badly managed relocation that paid no attention to the importance of maintaining family and community ties in social health and order. Similar concerns have led to the development of the community approach found in the work of architects (e.g. El Masri, 1993 – after the Yemen earthquake, 1982) and aid workers at the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at York University. For example, Maria Kojakovic, an architect from Dubrovnik, recognised that physical and psychological reconstruction went hand in hand when she organised community groups to make rapid repairs throughout the siege in 1991 so that buildings and monuments that had meaning to the community would not be lost. This work gave people social contact, physical activity and purpose.

My work at a community level involves the tasks of rebuilding broken internal and external social connections. I am especially concerned with reducing the marginalisation that victims and people on the edge of the disaster feel. As already described in my 'Bridging the Gap' model, my work is also about connecting victims to sources of help. As with individuals, communities need to be reconnected to themselves and the flow of life. Different parts of the disaster community need to be given a platform for their stories so that the whole can move forward and build the disaster story into their history and future.

Adlerian philosophy provides a framework for these aims – the belief that people are stronger and healthier if they recognise their interdependence with each other and the cosmos:

*“The development of self and connectedness are recursive processes that influence one another in positive ways. The greater one's personal development, the more able one can connect positively with others; the greater one's ability to connect with others, the more one is able to learn from them and develop oneself. ...The feeling of interconnectedness among people is essential not only for living together in society, but also for the development of each individual person.”*

- Adler, quoted in Stein and Edwards, 1998

Since a major consequence of disaster is internal and external disconnection, marginalisation and breaking of bonds, efforts to reconnect people with themselves, with society and with life are a priority for good community and individual recovery. As Zinner and Williams point out (1999) kinship and the feeling of connection is important if other people are to be relied on to come to the assistance of the vulnerable and those who cannot survive on their own. Disaster may break bonds but it also offers a very tangible opportunity for a shared experience where normal inhibitions are broken down and kinship can be created or reinforced, even where the dead and injured are not personally known to others. In my own experience of being involved with both disaster and death of a child, many deep friendships have been created through our shared experiences when disaster has exposed the essence of our common humanity.

Empathy, sympathy and identification are the building blocks of social connections according to Rando (preface, Zinner and Williams, 1999), fuelled by opportunities to imitate, to be caught up in the contagious responses of others, to have permission to express certain feelings publicly and to deal with one's own unresolved grief with others. In the western industrialised world, these are counter to the lonely process that grief and mourning have become. A tape called *'Tangihanga - Grief Is for Sharing'*, given to me after my daughter's death by Dr. Haare Williams, a Maori GP, about the community mourning rituals of his people showed me another way of being and acting.



### **Community based recovery (psycho-social or community outreach)**

Community based psycho-social outreach programmes aim to inform, support, manage and mobilise altruism and internal and external coping resources. I view them as a form of action research, where a system is working in partnership with disaster specialists and managers to discover what it needs and create its own solutions with support. Like others (Hills, 1994), I question whether rigid co-ordination procedures from a central control point is possible. To be responsive and useful to people on the ground, such programmes need to be emergent, flexible and creative. This does not mean a lack of planning and systematic approaches to ensure all aspects of the community are reached. Efforts by different parts of the community can be orchestrated to produce harmony to avoid unrealistic attempts to control agencies that have very different systems and methods of working. After previous disasters, many agencies have displaced their anxieties into time-wasting power games, especially over ownership of the response (Raphael, 1986; Hodgkinson & Stewart 1991/2001).

Through systematic reflections of what I actually did in community disasters, I realised my principle role was as a facilitator of community adjustment working within the community system. Key to this was learning to identify the people I could work alongside: the people and agencies with power of entry and resources; the people and agencies that represent and care about the community; and the various groups of victims, survivors and bereaved. Even though my primary client differed, I always worked with people from each of these groups. Most often I was present by invitation of a local government department or school. The one exception is the case of the Ufton Nervet rail crash, 2004, where, as I write, I am responding purely as a voluntary member of the community. In the past, my role has usually included the following:

- to build rapport and participation with key leaders, in order to undertake the process described in the community work model outlined at the start of this chapter
- to transform the personal and organisational blocks that prevented recovery work from being undertaken at all and for long enough
- to disseminate information and ideas for recovery and adjustment to as many people as possible who may be affected through newsletters, media, public meetings, seminars and internet. Good information may be all some need for recovery
- to help the system identify and set up safe structures and spaces in which creative things can happen to process the impact, deal with and manage repercussions and plan for the future

- to encourage multi-directional information feedback and review systems so that the full nature of the impact could be understood and ideas could be exchanged thus influencing further action
- to give cognitive framings and 'permissions' to keep healthy conversations and dialogue going between different parts of the community system on a regular basis
- to reach people who felt or were excluded from the central service provision, such as children and adolescents, the elderly living in care homes (as I discovered in Dunblane) and people with disabilities (such as the parent rescued from the Jupiter Cruise ship whose profound deafness excluded him from the help available)
- to empower the social milieu of survivors to improve the quality of support they are given by their families, friends, schools, places of worship and work
- to inform, support and make recommendations to my client agency, the managers and staff involved in the rescue and response
- to recommend and deliver personal consultancy and procedures for managers and staff to deal with their own reactions as they respond

I discovered a key part of my role was to unblock resistance to receiving help and get the systems moving again, leaving behind systems and enough ideas, skills and information for the community to continue learning about and responding to needs without external facilitation. No one person or agency or profession could do it all. Timely actions in the right place, especially by agencies that had power to reach many sectors, could do much more to set positive ripples in motion to counter the potentially destructive ripples of disaster. The opportunity to test out my learning more thoroughly came with the Omagh bomb response and this will be described in Part E.

Community based work is not however easy, as Lindy et al (1981) had also discovered after the Buffalo Creek disaster. Without good facilitation further stressful situations and conflicts could emerge, especially if people had not had opportunities for processing their emotions and displaced them elsewhere. Many other tasks have to be part of the facilitator's repertoire such as informal and formal conflict resolution, mediation and the promotion of messages of tolerance and insights. The latter are best given as soon as possible after a disaster by key community leaders and personalities that people will take notice of, and at regular intervals afterwards, including significant moments such as anniversaries and inquests when polarised attitudes emerge. A group I facilitated in Dunblane provides an illustration of this need and also how community leaders can promote conflict:

*“Conflicts between local politicians and local people were the subject of intense feelings in sessions held for local volunteers and workers. Local voluntary groups had successfully operated an Information and Drop-in centre from a shop in the High Street for 6 months. It had been closed down, they believed, because of the influence of a local politician who felt it had been there long enough. The level of anger exhibited by the volunteers indicated a deep sense of betrayal.”*

– Field notes, 1996

The same politician caused further aggravation a year later when her comments in the media about the town being held back by the anti-gun campaign by bereaved families was given as the cause of two families moving from the town. Some of the initiatives started by the bereaved, especially the high profile campaigning, had caused marked divisions. Their requests, such as for a large Christmas tree in the cemetery, made others in the community feel the bereaved parents were becoming too powerful. The use of one of the three public Disaster Funds to build a community centre rather than being given to families also caused anger

### **Community Based Recovery Initiatives: Examples**

My practice and research about other disasters showed me the multi-purpose nature of many community based responses:

- For defining circles of vulnerability and assessing the full range of need
- For creating normal, non-stigmatising activities which contain the requirements for recovery
- To provide occasional distraction and relief from distress and pre-occupation with the disaster
- To create channels through which more direct help could be offered and taken up
- To understand and work with the whole context of people affected by the trauma and to promote the idea of a healthily coping community
- To stimulate individual and community development which can be used after the disaster response is finished

I have described community methods according to their primary purpose in terms of the Be-FIT & Phys model described earlier. Further examples, such as a Community Oral history project, which links the emotional, social and cognitive channels of coping, will be given in the final section on the Omagh bomb response.

### Examples of Community Methods

Each channel can be used as follows to promote recovery, though of course some methods cover a range of channels according to the purpose it is used for.

- **BELIEFS:** e.g. to ensure community leaders and others give recognition of the disaster and its impact on individuals and the community. Providing the community with resources and control is vital. Community activities that also recognise the reality of a disaster and lost lives include quilt-making, recognising the event and people who died, and the community research project and book of the Ardoyne, Northern Ireland) Commemorative Project (2002)
- **EMOTIONAL CHANNEL:** the creation of community arts, drama and dance projects and rituals for remembrance to allow indirect opportunities for emotions to be expressed and processed. The newsletters produced after the Towyn Floods and Hillsborough disasters provided opportunities for people to write and share their poetry and thoughts.
- **FRIENDS, FAMILY, SOCIAL CHANNEL:** the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre organised a day out for children with their parents at a Theme Park and indirectly brought people together. Others gained a purpose in having a social role at the Centre, such as publishing the newsletter and maintaining the accommodation. Self-help groups, campaigning and fund-raising also fulfil this purpose, as did the opening of the Youth club after the Hungerford shootings. The gun trauma project I visited in New York, set up by the Harlem Medical Centre (Lipson, 1990), used an artist in residence to encourage multi-traumatised young people to paint well, a means by which the participants could engage with society by showing and selling their artwork.
- **IMAGINATION:** a community project to create their own ritual after the Charleville floods in Queensland also provided fun, distraction, socialisation, creative activity and emotional expression. The participants made their Flood Dragon which was later paraded down through the town and ritualistically cast off out of the community down the river (personal communications with the organisers).
- **THINKING CHANNEL:** Public meetings and the dissemination of information through different media are all useful methods in this channel, especially where information and ideas can be exchanged. The internet is transforming the situation with many web-sites being set up by self-help groups (e.g. the Paddington Survivors Group [www.paddintonsg.org.uk](http://www.paddintonsg.org.uk)), churches, youth organisations and official

agencies. Media-run sites, e.g. the BBC and Sky News sites, actively invite the sharing of stories.

- **PHYSICAL:** Community sports initiatives and outdoor activities help deal with the physical consequences of disaster as well as providing fun and social connection (Barnard et al, 1999). In Croatia, scout camps were actively used for these purposes to aid the recovery of young people (Bošnjak et al, 1994). Others have found quieter physical channels in massage and similar therapies individually and in groups, providing safe opportunities to touch and be touched (important for refugees and others who have been tortured and abused). Other community based projects meet the need for peaceful surroundings for reflection, such as memorial gardens, or as a means for people to regain control over their own surroundings. In a refugee camp I visited in Karlovac, Croatia in 1995, refugees had been able to customise their temporary homes to construct traditional porches and grow their own vegetables and flowers. In New York I visited the Harlem Medical Centre Injury Prevention Project, whose community volunteers turned small patches of derelict land and run-down playgrounds into areas where children could play safely and mended windows in high level to reduce the number of children falling from them (Martin, 1991)

### **Challenging myths about disaster communities: Third person action**

Community aspects of disaster are not well understood. I have closely monitored media reports for the way they are portrayed, and Mick North, one of the parents bereaved by the Dunblane massacre has become an ally in responding to them. They include the following:

#### **Myth 1: Disaster communities are often described as 'close knit'**

The close bonding and altruism that is visible after a disaster is often confused by the media to be the norm for the community. Community leaders perpetuate this view because of the natural need to promote the idea that the town or village is fine as a defensive action and to boost morale. Rarely do people define what they mean by close-knit, but an analysis of what they say suggests that they mean a homogenous community, self-sufficient in terms of emotional support, usually because of some special strength derived from its history or identity. Small towns such as Hungerford, Lockerbie, Dunblane, Soham and even Omagh (in spite of the visible religious divides) were seen as the traditional stoical communities, while others such as the Isle of Dogs and Liverpool gained their special status from their histories of surviving adversity. The Cornish village of Boscastle, devastated by a flash flood in August, 2004, was

described as tough with a special strength derived from its Cornish roots and history (The Independent, 18th August 2004).

However, my experience within such communities told me that the families and community were not always as strong and helpful as the public discourse suggested. This discourse made asking for help more difficult for those who were less stoical or who wanted to explore their trauma in a healthy and positive manner. Help had to be sought indirectly from accessible local professionals or volunteers who would listen. In fact people's reactions were often compounded or made worse by the reactions of those around them and the views expressed publicly by community leaders, politicians and the media. The view that 'we must forget' or that Hungerford is 'a close-knit community that can support its own' (even though one of its own had killed his neighbours), meant that some were afraid to admit they couldn't forget or that their family and community were more of a hindrance than a help. The strength of community conflicts after a disaster challenges the 'close-knit' label, as does the vandalism of memorials, for example at Enniskillen, Hungerford and Omagh. My own definition of a strong community is one that has boundaries and networks flexible enough to be accepting of newcomers and external support but strong enough to be at ease with difference and divisions which are inevitable in any human group.

**Myth 2: Communities are a homogenous entity with leaders who speaks for all**

The media are quick to single out a key member of the community who is able to deal with the media and who often seeks out this role for themselves. This person is then portrayed as if they are the spokesperson for the community, which is regarded as a single entity that can be spoken for. The 'leader' often represents a very particular view or section of the community and other views are not represented, as happened at Dunblane. Groups that are in a minority or do not have power may also go unrepresented. For this reason, I try to reach non - formal groups and unattached individuals and grass-root workers, such as health visitors and youth workers, so that the voices and needs of the 'unheard' can be given a platform.

**Myth 3: Communities recover quickly, often without the need for external help**

After the Soham child murders in 2002, the Observer newspaper carried articles about the fact that communities like Dunblane and Hungerford had successfully 'got over' their disasters. One commentator had only recently returned to Dunblane after living abroad and the others were 'community leaders'. The articles implied that recovery was speedy and achieved from within, as shown by the speed with which normal activities

were resumed and people were getting on with their lives. To a large extent this is so, but it denied the on-going, often up and down journeys that some sectors of the community still make (as shown in many TV documentaries shown at disaster anniversaries and in the uproar in Hungerford about a new documentary film, *The Hungerford Massacre*, BBC1, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2004). The Observer articles denied the many small ways in which external help was given and received in the community. Such help often remains invisible because it is fed quietly into the community through familiar people and existing structures. People are not always aware that they are being helped. The professional expertise behind self-help tips or a leaflet picked up in a library is seldom regarded as external or professional support.

## D 5

### **REVEALING THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING MY DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICE**

This section is about the principles I discerned that lay behind the work I had developed instinctively from my experience and practice. The reader may prefer to leave this section until they have read the account of my work in Omagh in Part E as this work, and the reading I have done since then, has contributed greatly to the thinking presented in this section. I have made a decision to place this section here so that Part D provides a comprehensive account of my disaster management principles and practice.

Understanding the principles more clearly has helped me locate my work in relation to that of others in disaster management and helped me to define what I do more effectively. This in itself takes my work into a political sphere of challenging establishment views about disaster management and contingency planning.

#### **MY TACIT UNDERSTANDING OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT THEORY**

Disaster work in the UK was hardly established at the time of the Hungerford shootings, especially in relation to schools. I only had the templates being developed by the first UK specialist consultancy set up in 1989 by people who had worked in the disasters just prior to Hungerford. I approached the work from the perspectives I knew best, one based in community work (Henderson & Thomas, 1980), preventative education, approaches from humanistic and transpersonal psychology (e.g. Maslow (1956), Assaglioli (1975), counselling and group work theory (Egan, 1986) facilitation theory (Heron, 1990). This was congruent with my own practical understanding of disaster work. I understood the trauma experience as a holistic process in which the people affected were an integral, self-determining part of the journey.

Thus my theoretical stance was clear to me tacitly, if not propositionally, and it resonated with other accounts of UK disaster managers suddenly thrust into this role following the spate of UK disasters in the 1980's (Newburn, 1993a; Mead, 1996). However, I did not know the full range of what was available and what I was rejecting. At that time, the psycho-social view of disaster response was generally accepted, as



shown by the fact that the first Government Disasters Working Party consisted mainly of Social Workers (Home Office report, 1991). Raphael's book *'When Disaster Strikes'* (1986) was regarded as the definitive text for psycho-social disaster response. It drew on the work of disaster sociologists such as D.S. Mileti et al (1975), Thomas Drabek (1986), Enrico Quarentelli (1978) and Russell Dynes (1970) who were influential in challenging the theoretical models of civil Emergency management from the military command and control models to those requiring partnership with communities. Other early practitioner researchers were social psychologists with a strong feel for viewing the individual in their social context (e.g. Lifton, 1968; Erikson, 1976; Lindy et al, 1981).

My propositional enquiries helped me unravel the many dimensions involved in disaster work, each with their own theories, concerning spatial impact, the temporal stages, the scales and types of event, levels of impact (personal to community), types of survivor, aspects of impact (psychological, physical, social), and organisational issues. This complexity is rarely covered in one integrated theoretical model as these examples show: environmental hazards (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1993), war (Milgram, 1993); their context, e.g. work-place (Mitchell, 1983; Williams, 1993), schools (Ayalon, 1988; Johnson, 1989, 1993; Capewell 1994, 1996); or the stage or type of involvement, such as psycho-social (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1991, preventative (Ayalon, 1988, Lahad et al in CSPC vol. 1, 1988, 1993) and age or social group (Gordon & Wraith, 1993, Figley, 1985, 1989).

Trying to construct my own theory as an external, independent consultant made me appreciate that my confusions arose because models were designed for official, organisational responses or for a narrow aspect of the disaster, such as psychological treatment, rather than for my role. General management models of consultancy were geared to planned, longer term involvement in organisations. My reality was that I was contracted by policy makers and managers who had little or no experience of making decisions in this kind of environment. They relied on, as noted by Berger and Luckman (1966:15), non-theoretical or 'common sense' assumptions. Unfortunately, in the volatile disaster climate, 'common sense' may be heavily distorted by personal reactions and social constructions of the meaning of disaster and needs of survivors.

## THEORIES OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

### Developing my theoretical understanding of my work

My reflections on my practice showed that what I was learning from articles and other professionals was influenced by a combination of the following theories, models and principles based on:

1. **Accumulated human wisdom and folk tradition** in which horror has to be confronted with the help of others and cosmic powers resulting in some kind of transformation and growth, for example the Native American rituals for the reintegration of warriors, 'dehumanised' by war, into the community (Wilson, 1989). In more restrained societies, a different wisdom of emotional control and public inaction developed.
2. **Medical and psychological recovery models**, ranging from the management of 'moral cowardice' (war trauma) by hanging or firing squad to 'talking cures' of Breuer, Rivers and Freud (Beveridge, 1996) in which social support would speed their recovery. Some models moved beyond the deficit view of trauma (focussing on symptoms and dysfunction) to disaster management as a means of mobilising coping and resilience (Caplan, 1964, Lazarus, 1977). Green, Wilson and Lindy's model (1985) was particularly influential and sought to accommodate cross-sectional and the longitudinal, stage elements of disaster.
3. **Emergency Planning models of disaster management** The concept of strategies for responding to whole community threat and damage had its roots in the research of Quarentelli (1978, 1984) and Drabek (1986). Emergency planner's predominantly used stage models, according different sets of tasks and priorities to each phase, with A.F.C. Wallace in 1956 first defining the stages: warning, threat, impact, inventory, rescue and remedy, recovery and rehabilitation (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1993: 81). These were later refined by others to become: warning, impact and rescue, immediate aftermath (including phases of euphoria and close bonding), medium-term (as the impact sinks in, disillusionment) and long-term with either recovery at a different or enhanced level of adaptation or disintegration (Raphael and Wilson, 1993). Sociologists have questioned the stage model as too simplistic for every kind of disaster and the differential recovery of different parts of the community (Kroll-Smith and Couch, 1993: 81).
4. **Community Preventative Educational Models**  
These models grew from a salutogenic approach to disaster (Caplan, 1964, Lazarus, 1977), where coping styles, not symptoms, were emphasised and recovery was viewed as a communal activity. They emphasised the mitigation of

potential problems by pro-action and outreach to all parts of the disaster community because of the stigma attached to asking for help (Lindy et al, 1981). Pro-active prevention influenced Ayalon's Community Oriented Preventive Education programmes (1988); Lahad's Community Stress Prevention Centre work (Lahad et al 1988, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2003); and the three stage preventive action model for schools developed by Nader and Pynoos (1993). Preventative action also informs critical incident stress management and debriefing models of Jeffrey Mitchell and his associates (Mitchell, 1983, 1988; Dyregrov, 1997; and for schools, Johnson, 1989, 1998). The importance of community educational and psycho-social action in the immediate response has been recognised in the USA National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH 2002) and the work following the Omagh bomb (Gillespie et al, 2003). Zinner and Williams (1999: 237-254) have devised a '*Reference Frame for Community Recovery and Restoration*' from analyses of many community disasters that identifies characteristics in the pre-, during and post-disaster phases that, if encouraged by helpful processes, will help the community recover.

## MY CURRENT THEORETICAL POSITION

By looking at the different theoretical viewpoints, I was able to understand where my practice was located. My attempts to ensure hidden voices were heard resonated with the advocacy for the same by Hewitt (1995, 1998). I agreed with others (e.g. Davis, 1999, 2001) that a purely psychological view of the disaster impact was too narrow and that other aspects need attention, such as the impact on the economy (Hirshleifer, 2002). On the other hand, some emergency planning models pay insufficient attention to psychological issues and Dynes believes that social capital, not the destruction of physical infrastructure should be the primary base for community response (Dynes, 2003: 15). I also concur with Dynes who argues that previous writing has focussed too much on past situations rather than considering models for the future:

*"...outmoded ideas [are codified and presented] as universal truths. In the future, unconventional "hazards" will impact non-traditional social units. Standardizing a format could delimit flexibility and creativity ... an iron cage in conceptualizing the future."*

- Dynes, 1999

Throughout my work, I have noted my unhappiness with fixed protocols and the military 'command and control' model that has dominated many statutory emergency planning departments. Dynes argues that:

*"legislative and technological 'improvements' often make emergency planning more rigid and increasingly inadequate. A more adequate model [is] based on conditions of continuity, coordination, and cooperation."*

- Dynes, 1994: 141-158

Rigid control is unnecessary as total chaos in a community is rare unless there are strong pre-existing grievances and inequalities (Dynes, 1970, 2003; Drabek, 1986), and people have always been active in their own rescue and recovery, pointing to the 9/11 USA rescue as being "flexible and adaptive, not centrally directed" (Dynes, 2003). Indeed, others believe that such spontaneous networks are vital for the rapid dissemination of information and for innovative information gathering and response (Comfort and Cahill, 1988:181). In many situations in which *"lower level personnel are faced with on-site decisions ... for which there are no clear pre-existing policies or standard operating procedures"* (Lewis, 1988:175), a situation also found in the Hillsborough disaster (Davis & Scraton, 1997: 13). Unfortunately, many of the post 9/11 US Homeland Security concepts have seen a return to:

*"... clean Command and Control lines with the public viewed as disruptive and lacking in skills – [with the ironic result that the] fight to remove the burka [will serve] only to keep our own population shrouded in burkas of control."*

- Dynes, 2003

My thoughts have also led me to think about the application of Chaos Theory to disaster management and I discovered from internet searches that this has been explored in California by Koehler, whose conclusion in the last line is the same as my own:

*"Generally, the implications of chaos theory is that 'no grand theory of management is likely to appear' and by extension, no grand theory of disaster management will appear that applies to all disasters and all environments particularly in varying social time contexts. Sweeping theories are replaced by bounded classes of rules of thumb. But, in a disaster situation, even rules of thumb may be unstable. The challenge is to develop managers who possess*

*the capacity and tempered self-assurance to contend with these ever-expanding rules of thumb."*

- Koehler (1996)

Such thoughts may have even more relevance with the massive changes noted by t'Hart in recent years with the 'politicisation and globalisation of crises, the greater involvement of media and the empowerment of victims and survivors' (t'Hart, 2001)

Alternative models of crisis management have been sought. Dynes called for a **problem solving** approach that allows solutions to be improvised in the response period, building on patterns of pre-disaster behaviour rather than trying to plan for every situation (Dynes, 1994:152 Dynes). Hills prefers to speak of 'liaison' between different agencies rather than command and even co-ordination, as this 'provides an environment in which co-operation and feedback can thrive' (Hills, 1994). These desires for models that can accommodate divergence, emergence, platforms for hidden voices and unpredictability back my assertion that **action research** has relevance to strategic disaster work and its methods.

Such strategies are by no means new. From early on in my practice I was aware of models of community based strategies akin to participative action research in the work of people dealing with mass emergencies in non-westernised countries (McCallin, 1992, Tortorici, 1992, Brinton Lykes, 2001). The community-centred approach was recommended by the World Health Organisation in 1976 (Métraux & Aviles, 1991) while others were promoting an ecological or 'person-in-environment' perspective of disaster management (Germain, 1981); holistic approaches (Dagnino, 1991) and empowerment and participation by Jareg (1991). I felt western disaster response could learn from them, yet they seemed to be ignored and then subsumed by attempts to set up trauma clinics based on western medical treatments. Some of these ideas have, however, been integrated in the west, for example Joanne Tortorici Luna's '*Collaborative, Community Diagnosis and Healing*' designed to guide a school to evaluate its own psychosocial state and then to develop ways to impact on the problems identified by its inhabitants. (Tortorici Luna, 2002:3).

Dynes recent ideas for the future of disaster management (Dynes, 2003) in terms of social capital and social mobilisation also have the characteristics of action research. Building community resilience, he claims needs **creativity**; **flexibility** (the ability to swap roles); **wisdom** (the ability to question what is known, know limits, and seek new

knowledge, **respectful Interaction** (the capacity to listen to others and either act on what they say or integrate with their own ideas), the ability to self-organise, and the courage to **by-pass old experience** (Dynes, 2003)

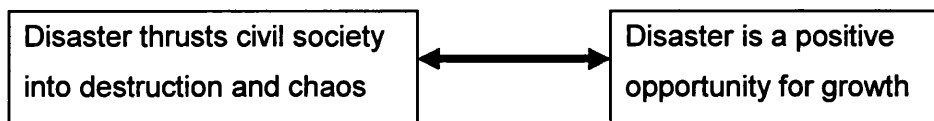
A synthesis of all my practical, experiential and propositional learning has helped me understand how different theories correspond to where people place themselves along different axes of thought and how I need to clarify where I stand. I have drawn below the axes which I think are important. The extreme position is given in the boxes at either end and I have added a statement of where I believe my practice is located along each axis:

### Axis 1: Underlying philosophical world-view



I **believe** the impact of disaster is an interaction between the objective reality of the external event and the subjective realities of the people experiencing it. I agree with the view that *'crises are the domain of multiple realities and conflicting cognitions.'* (t Hart, 1993: 48).

### Axis 2: Beliefs about human behaviour:



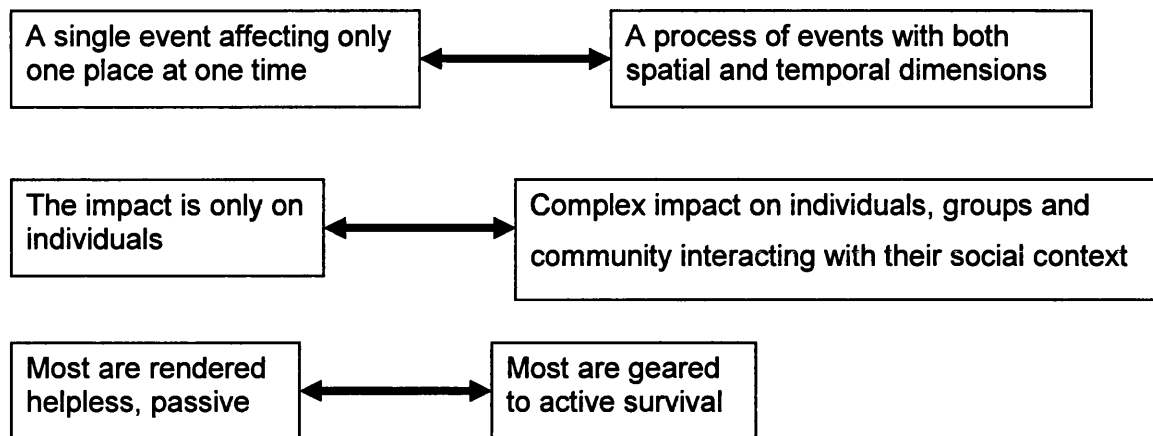
I **believe** that disaster created both chaos and growth but that chaos often contains the seeds for new ideas and resourcefulness. Human resilience outlives physical infrastructure and communities quickly self-organise and adapt to the new situation, though this may be speeded by timely, high quality assistance

### Axis 3: Beliefs about the cause of traumatic stress reactions



I **believe** they result from an interaction between personal psychological and biological factors, internal and external coping resources and the specific features of the person's experience of the event. Anyone can be traumatised, though some are more likely to develop clinical reactions than others

#### Axis 4: Beliefs about the extent and nature of impact



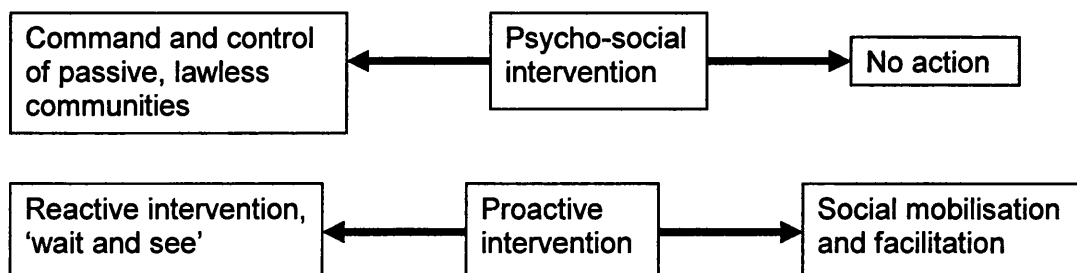
I **believe** that disasters set off processes spatially, (the 'ripple effect', affecting far more people than those directly exposed), and temporally, with definable phases though these may operate at different times in different places. The impact could be individual, collective and cumulative but variable in terms of intensity, timing and speed of recovery depending on many variables. While some people may be rendered helpless and passive, self-help and organisation of lay people would always be present especially before professional organisations are mobilised

#### Axis 5: Professional perspective



I **believe** that the impact of a disaster is an ecological issue but that my professional interest focussed my attention to social, psychological and educational aspects

#### Axis 6: Disaster response styles



I **believe that** different styles of response are needed at different times and places with flexible approaches geared to social mobilisation and empowerment. I preferred to be facilitative rather than interventionist, but believed that doing something rather than

nothing was always preferable even if only to determine that no action was needed. I believed it was immoral to wait for problems to develop for the want of preventative action to deal with problems while they were small.

In practical terms these underlying beliefs translated in to beliefs about how I would practice, especially where there was no predetermined community disaster response plan beyond the initial rescue and recovery, and no plans in the organisations I worked with. Action research strategies, in which knowledge was gathered collaboratively in cycles of action, reflection and planning, was ideal for these volatile situations.

A few years after I began my business, I began to include a document about the principles guiding my work in the information pack I sent to clients. This is my most recent version:

### **CCME's GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- **The good management of an incident and its aftermath is important in reducing the primary stress of the incident and mitigating secondary stress and other repercussions.** Just providing post-trauma support services is not enough.
- **The basis of good crisis management is good general management.** If integrated as a normal part of general management then the movement to managing disaster or will be smooth. Disaster has the power to reveal weaknesses in organisations, such as poor communication, staff morale and administrative systems.
- **The disaster response needs systems which allow fast, flexible and informed thinking.** Bureaucratic processes needed for normal decision making will need to be supplemented with a more flexible and responsive style.
- **A rapid response reduces unnecessary secondary trauma and long-term costs.** Time and energy will not be wasted dealing with preventable stress, team and organisational issues.
- **Most individuals, schools and communities are capable of coping with and managing their own incident IF supported and empowered to do so.** Trained, supported and resourced 'recovery' agents can reach parts of the community not easily served by statutory agencies and provide the stepping stones to specialist help.
- **Vicarious traumatic stress in staff can be reduced by appropriate management.** Both staff and managers, whether directly or indirectly involved in the



response, can be affected. Good management of the incident and its aftermath, pre-incident training can significantly reduce staff stress.

- **Teams, communities and organisations need attention, not just individuals.**  
Team development for the disaster response team before an incident is as important as individual skills training. Support after the event is also needed for the whole team, even if not used. Any system disrupted by disaster may need assistance to anticipate and manage the friction and differences created by sudden change.
- **That no single agency or profession has a monopoly on disasters or the recovery.** There is a place for a whole range of social, medical, educational and other interventions given by a range of professional and lay organisations. Everyone has a place as long as everyone: knows their role, knows when their specific contribution is best used and respects the roles and skills of others.
- **Effective inter-agency responses rarely happen without joint preparation.**  
Issues of leadership, lines of management, different philosophies and practice, roles and professional/agency jealousies need to be addressed well before disaster strikes. Flexible co-operation between agencies is more likely to work in real disasters than rigid co-ordination (Hills, 1994)
- **Effective responses are community led, specialist supported and expert guided.** In major incidents that overwhelm local agencies, there is a place for using external expertise - as manager/team consultants, co-ordinators, or providers of top-up services. The sensitivity with which help is introduced and offered is crucial and they should know when to leave, having empowered local agencies to sustain the response.

The most recent addition to my document is:

- **Action research approaches are my preferred style of practice.** Disasters are complex, unique and contextual events that set off a process in which cumulative feedback loops are created which influence the course of events. Action research methods can accommodate the diverse nature of people, their reactions and actions. They seek to mobilise and harness helpful processes to influence the future and help the community to direct and achieve its own healing, with external support being offered in partnership, rather than being imposed.

## PART E

### A SYNTHESIS OF PRACTICE-BASED ACTION RESEARCH

1. **The Omagh Bomb response: A major cycle of practice-based action research**
2. **Stories from the Omagh Bomb response: Managing Self, Task and Context**
3. **A 'messy' action research story: "When a woman spoke for herself..."**

I shall use this last section of my thesis for two purposes. Firstly, I shall illustrate how I applied action research to an unplanned, volatile situation. Secondly, I shall offer evidence of how I transformed my earlier personal and professional experiences into a useful practice and how this practice then formed a further cycle of action and reflections that further influenced the development of the models and practice framework presented in its current form in Parts C and D.

I have chosen the Omagh response for this purpose for two reasons. First, because the length and breadth of my involvement provided a major testing ground for integrating past learning, stretching from the intense work in the immediate after-math in 1998 through to the medium and long-term responses that ended in 2000 and, thereafter until 2001 other work in the Irish Republic that resulted directly from the Omagh work, The second reason can be found in its timing. The tragedy happened twenty months after I began the CARPP programme and four months after I had completed the Diploma paper when I was searching to clarify my M.Phil. enquiry questions. For the Diploma I had chosen to research the Newbury Community Epidemiology study which I was involved in at the time. Though a useful contribution to my professional practice it was a special case of it and I wanted to return to my core interest in major disaster response. I was eager to practise action research with more intent and rigour and still needed to test out my still tentative disaster response ideas and models in a more comprehensive programme. The opportunity suddenly presented to me by the Omagh bomb response gave me the ideal chance to do both as well as investigate the suitability of action research for use in the volatile environments in which I practise.

I have explained in section A3 the dilemmas of communicating the non-linear process that resulted. While the sequence of my chapters suggests that the Omagh bomb work came after the ideas in Parts C and D were fully formed it did not. I had produced the tentative templates of these ideas through the cycles of action and reflection from the

Hungerford shootings to the three disaster responses I made in 1996. All of these experiences had enhanced certain aspects of my models but I had not had the opportunity to test them out in any response of comparable length to my Hungerford response. The Omagh work gave me this opportunity and it lasted in various forms throughout what I expected to be the duration of my time at CARPP. The initial intensity and the subsequent length of the Omagh work made it an emotionally charged experience that required time for processing and re-processing the experience, much of which I did as I wrote, re-wrote and edited this manuscript. Other major incidents and multiple work-place trauma responses as well as lectures and training programmes interceded in this process and influenced my further reflections on the Omagh work as well as the development of my models presented in Parts C and D. Including accounts of all this later work in a linear fashion was impossible in the space available in this thesis. This later disaster work was much briefer than the Omagh work and contributed to my learning in specific aspects of my work rather than to the whole of it. I therefore decided to concentrate here, in this thesis, on the Omagh response and use the data from later responses to illustrate my enquiries into my articulation of action research, especially in the sections on quality and integrity (section B3) and methodology (section B4).

In this section on my Omagh work, I shall give, in section E1, an overview of the bombing incident, the response by Statutory Authorities, the role my colleagues and I played in this, and the viability of using action research in this situation. I shall follow this with stories from my practice to illustrate how I managed the three elements of my response – self, task and context in section E2 and then conclude with a final story, *“When one woman tells her truth ...”*. This is an account of one distinct part of my work which, because it concerns one school, is bounded enough to be told in more detail than is possible with most other aspects of my response. My work with another school was intense and full of useful learning but I could only choose one example. My choice was made because I had far more contact with the wider system between the face to face work and the processes operating in the background were exposed for more visibly than is usually the case. It gives evidence of the ecological manner of our approach with its interconnected web of tasks and targeted processes; work with individuals, groups and organisations; the political, personal and professional; overt and covert human motivations; the specific and the archetypal.

## E 1

### **THE OMAGH BOMB RESPONSE:** **A MAJOR CYCLE OF PRACTICE-BASED ACTION RESEARCH**

#### **THE OMAGH BOMB DISASTER: A Brief Résumé.**

I shall first give a brief review of the background of the disaster and of the overall Statutory Authority response strategy in which my response was located under my business name, the Centre for Crisis Management and Education (CCME).

#### **The disaster story: The Incident**

Omagh in County Tyrone is a small market town in Northern Ireland serving a regional population of some 200,000. On the afternoon of Saturday 15th August 1998, the town was crowded with people shopping for the new school term and waiting for the Carnival procession. A coded warning about a bomb placed near the Courthouse was received from the Real IRA, a dissident republican group opposed to the Peace agreement of April that year. The police directed people to the other end of town, in fact right to the place where the bomb was about to explode in a car. The final death toll was twenty-nine plus unborn twins. Nearly four hundred were injured and many witnesses, lay and professional rescuers and hospital staff were traumatised (Sperrin Lakeland HSCT, 1999; Firth-Cozens et al, 1999). Many were children and young people. Half the dead came from Omagh, the other half from surrounding villages, other parts of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Spain. Many children and young people were amongst the dead, bereaved and injured. Injuries were severe including traumatic limb amputation and disfigurement. A teenaged girl lost her eyes.

#### **The General Response: the management of the aftermath by local agencies.**

The early rescue was led by bystanders and police already in the vicinity. Because of the large numbers injured, they continued helping when the emergency service teams arrived and took people to various hospitals and medical centres. The dead were taken to a temporary morgue set up in the local army barracks. The local Health and Social Care Trust in association with the Omagh District Council quickly organised a centre for relatives where they could be kept informed and made ready for the identification of bodies. An Emergency Information and Support Centre was opened and staffed by volunteers from various victims support and counselling groups from Northern Ireland. A multi-agency co-ordinating group was formed, along with a Community Groups forum

and a Churches Forum, composed of clergy and lay officials from all denominations. These forum encouraged co-operation between local groups and organisations across the town and district. The District Council and the Chamber of Commerce focussed on re-building economic activity in the town through initiatives such as '*Give a Day to Omagh*' and the long-term re-construction of damaged buildings. The psychological support effort soon became the responsibility of the newly established Omagh Trauma Centre, backed by existing local community services and voluntary groups. Several years later, the Omagh Centre became the first trauma centre for Northern Ireland and continues to treat people with clinical post-traumatic stress disorder.

### **My response story: The CCME Team Response**

My inclusion in the response was facilitated by a long-standing colleague who played a key role in the statutory bomb response. I was initially contracted to the Western Education and Libraries Board which had responsibility in the Omagh District for 80 schools plus Libraries, Youth centres and services, and HQ staff and regional Advisors, Welfare and Technical services. Further contracts were obtained with two other Education Authorities, one of which was in the Republic of Ireland. During this time, I also assisted the Sperrin Lakeland Health and Social Care Trust, a Health Board in the Republic, multi-agency co-ordinating groups, the Churches Forum and other community 'agents' and groups.

I led the CCME response and was joined in rotation by three different associates according to their availability. Sue Pittman and Paul Barnard worked with me in the immediate aftermath and in the later stages with schools and Health Boards, while Dr. Lilian Beattie helped with the direct work with teachers and children in one school. I arrived alone ten days after the bombing to persuade Officials that the scale of the work was too great for one person. Thereafter two of us worked from about 8 am to 11 pm nearly every day for the first two weeks. During this first phase, we negotiated our entry into many parts of the system and community, built rapport and assessed the situation and needs while at the same time offering initial support, information and ideas to key managers and professionals in various parts of the service, creating 'agents of recovery' as we proceeded. We began visits to schools requiring more specific support. We assisted in many immediate tasks plus planning for the future. We returned for another week at the end of September when we continued school visits and assisted with emerging issues, such as the visit of US President Clinton and other dignitaries. As the situation began to stabilise, we started to consolidate our initial work and further encourage the local networks we had connected. Other tasks included

helping youth workers to deal with high profile invitations and 'rewards' for victim groups and to respond to the needs of young people about to leave home for University. A great deal of literature (Capewell, 1998b) in the form of handbooks and leaflets was produced throughout and we negotiated with the local media to disseminate self-help tips.

Work continued under different contracts with some of the community groups and two schools and Education Boards at intervals over the next two years until 2000. Follow-up contact was kept with some individuals, some of which continues sporadically. Our work with a school and Health Board in the Irish Republic directly led to work in the Republic with Teacher Unions, schools and a Health Board until 2001.

### **The sources for used for Part E**

The sources I have used for cycles of reflection on this case study of the Omagh bomb impact and response include:

- correspondence to my contacts immediately after the bombing and correspondence relating to my contracts with the organisations involved in the response
- notes recorded during the contract and official reports written during and at the end of the contracts (Capewell, 1998a & b, 2000b; Capewell & Pittman, 1998)
- e-mail dialogues with people engaged in the Omagh work and other aspects of Northern Ireland's 'Troubles'
- local and national newspaper cuttings, especially local papers up to 2000.
- TV reports and documentaries such as ITV's *'Omagh, One Year On'*
- articles (Bolton et al 2000, Bradley, 2000, Gillespie et al 2002, Pointon, 2003), including my colleagues account of our work (Pittman, 2000).
- research documents into the impact on hospital doctors (Firth-Cozens et al, 1999) The Omagh Community Study (Sperrin Lakeland HSCT, 1999), The Omagh Children's Study (Sperrin Lakeland HSCT, 2000) and trauma in children (Purcell, 2001).
- records of consultancy sessions and collaborative enquiry group sessions with my associates
- action research studies, (Fay, 1997, Smyth, 1998, 2004 Dyer et al, 1998)
- books such as *Lost Lives* (McKittrick et al, 1999)
- face-to-face and phone conversations that have continued since the bomb with people I worked with in Northern Ireland and The Irish Republic.

## **ACTION RESEARCH: A Viable Approach for Responding to Disaster?**

By the time of the Omagh bombing, action research had become my preferred practice option on theoretical, ideological and practical grounds. Many enquiry questions were therefore at the forefront of my mind as my entry into another disaster became more likely. These included questions of the kind: *"How well could action research be done when people and systems were totally engaged in survival, overwhelmed by distress or in a state of shock and numbness?"*, *"Would I be able to act in an action research mode in a situation containing many unknowns and difficult issues when I was still learning the methodology?"*, *"Could I create something that would spark off further loops of action enquiry so that the work could continue after my team had left?"*, *"How far was I able to engage others in this process and create 'communities of enquiry' where people felt equal in influencing what was done?"*, *"Was this possible where my status as an external consultant requiring fees immediately created dilemmas for some people?"*, *"Could a process be initiated that would help the community (or at least key parts of it) to know itself better in their disrupted state and begin to heal itself?"*. I was experiencing working on the 'edge of chaos' and the need to 'manage ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity' described by Weil as a reality of public sector work but without any agreed opportunity to use the systemic action research methods she advocates (Weil, 1998: 37-61).

Deciding how to tell my Omagh action research story has also been difficult as so many of the keys to decision-making lie in the many minute details that would soon overwhelm a reader. I was a synthesising conduit for a multitude of interrelated, iterative feedback loops of processes, tasks, relationships and conversations that are difficult to disentangle. I have chosen a route that made most sense to me as I wrote and tried to make sense for readers. I decided to show how my action research strategies were applied to each group of tasks that contributed to the path we constructed, a process that acted as a model to our partners of how they could create theirs while we walked alongside. This will be done using examples of how I managed the three elements of the disaster response described in Part D: self, task and context.

Before doing this, I shall outline the key contextual features of the disaster situation and then consider how these affected the viability of using action research strategies and methods in my response to the bombing:

- **the many unknown variables in the disaster situation** meant that an approach that kept an open, enquiring mind was preferable to applying past patterns and methods from approaches used in previous situations in a prescriptive manner. An assessment using my S-S CIRA model (Part D, diag. 12) showed that there were many site and incident specific variables interacting with the objective reality of the disaster in each of the many parts each community affected by the bomb. Past experience and existing theories were helpful informants, but they needed to be adapted or re-created for local conditions.
- **there were so many actors and stakeholders** involved in the response who would determine their own response, including private individuals, private companies, public, statutory and voluntary agencies at local to national levels.
- **the consequences of the disaster impact were unknown.** It could be expected from previous experience that certain repercussions were likely, but predicting how they would be manifested was difficult. In addition, suggesting to local people that preventative action be taken to mitigate them was a dangerous route when community bonding was intense and they could not believe it would ever be otherwise.
- **the disaster work was a strange land** for many people and agencies where existing signposts for living had been torn down. In addition to negotiating new territory, it was necessary to seek help from **external professionals** who had the level of expertise, experience and detachment from the impact required for a disaster on this scale. Even with my experience of working in the area and with local agencies beforehand, I was still entering a different part of the organisation and working with different people at a time when they felt vulnerable because their existing systems and skills had been overwhelmed or challenged.
- **the volatile, ever-changing situation** meant that no one could be sure what was needed or for how long, making contracting for an uncertain task and future difficult. Opinions of decision-makers using their own reactions and often ill-informed beliefs were as varied and changeable as the situation.
- **the needs were complex and large-scale, covering an extended disaster community.** No one person, agency or group of agencies could manage the situation without the consensus and participation of the communities involved.

These factors meant that any rigidly defined response and contract was unsuitable. The complex, ever-changing situation required an approach that could accommodate emerging needs, many opinions, and many self-determining people, each on their own post-trauma journey. Further, I could only offer a contract and approach which would



allow me to be true to my own values and professional expertise. The community work style that I had used throughout my career contained many elements of action research and was thus an obvious choice for me. This approach could be enhanced by my new learning about action research in the following ways:

- more **disciplined reflection** before action – important in emergency situations where reactivity, quick cures and the need to control can be a defence against distress and chaos.
- more rigorous framing in a set of **beliefs and values** that defined the action research approach
- a **wider range of strategies and methods** to call on, and the principles and confidence to adapt them for new uses or to create alternatives
- **support** from a community of action research practitioners.
- a philosophy that validated **the integration of practice and research**, where the knowledge created could influence the subsequent action.
- the **valuing of diverse and locally created knowledge** from lived experience, that was not overridden by remotely created theoretical knowledge.
- **quality and integrity** could be checked and tested as I worked, and improvements made when it mattered.
- having a framework that encouraged **participation and creativity**.
- having the **liberation of people** as a goal, especially vital in a situation where people could easily be trapped by their trauma if appropriate action was not taken at the right time. Many of the specific trauma methods I had developed, such as the Trauma Process and BE FIT & Phys models, also had this aim.
- having an approach where **practical actions and outcomes** were valued, more than those that adhered to pre-determined rules.

Though action research appeared to be the only way I could approach this uncertain situation and contract, the conditions I encountered placed limits on the type of action research I could undertake. It had to be:

- a strategy of possibilities and aspirations showing mainly in the attitudes and presence I brought to the work in the relationships and conversations
- demonstrated in the quality of attention given to each person or situation, and in my ability to enquire in a way that helped people become their own enquirers as they researched their own journeys.

There was little place for:

- **formal procedures and groups** needing pre-planning and organisation. I was contracted to an organisation that did not want to interrupt its normal timetable to have regular meetings about the disaster response. In most schools curriculum and exam timetables could not easily give way to more than a brief mention of the bomb, though there were a few notable exceptions who found ways to manage this.
- **true democratic participation** in all stages of the strategy, because people in a state of shock or denial did not make easy partners in such endeavours. They wanted to hand everything over to an expert but at the same time did not want to lose control or their belief that they should know what to do.

These core requirements of action research therefore had to be embodied in me and my colleagues as we worked with managers and professionals. By modelling the passing on of skills, information and ideas, we empowered them and encouraged them to do the same with their staff and in the community. We sought out the views of as many different people as we could so that we could build a representative story of needs to Managers so that they could respond in a more democratic manner.

## E 2

### **STORIES FROM THE OMAGH BOMB RESPONSE:**

#### **MANAGING SELF, TASK AND CONTEXT**

Though it is not easy to separate such interdependent elements of my work, I shall organise these stories according to the three spheres of managing a disaster response defined in Part D: Managing Self, Managing Task and Process and Managing Context. A story that gives a holistic picture of my practice will be given in the story in Part E3 which concludes this thesis about our extended programme of work in a school.

#### **SPHERE 1: MANAGING SELF**

##### **Readiness for entry to the Omagh bomb response.**

Before I gained entry to the disaster response, I had to manage my own personal issues at the time and my own reactivated anxieties about entering another uncertain disaster contract, being sensitive to the usual jibes directed towards external experts. To work effectively within the contract, I had to manage my reactions to distressing stories and displacement activities, such as denial, power games and sabotage, that I knew were all too common in systems disrupted by disaster.

At the root of my self-management lay an examination of my personal readiness to do this work. My main tools were action inquiry and making use of the personal applications of my own models such as BE FIT & Phys and the Trauma Process Map. From the moment I heard about the bomb, I began to pay attention to my thoughts, feelings and reactions, first in order to deal with my reactions to the horror of the incident and the fact that places and people I knew could be affected. Then I turned to reflecting on how I could support colleagues I knew would be heavily involved, ending with the motivating question, *'What can I do?'* Once I had been asked to consider responding myself, my initial support of my existing networks then began to merge into tasks for preparing for entry. I set about gaining information purposefully. I sent 'tasks' that could help school Principals establish 'circles of vulnerability' in their schools, such as the school triage exercise, to my existing contacts in the area. By doing this, I was also knocking in the 'tent pegs' in several places that would establish 'agents of recovery' and thus smooth my entry and stabilise my position once there.

## Support and resources

By the time of the Omagh bomb, I had learnt that contracting, even in volatile imperfect conditions was important to my self-management. I also knew that my stress would be kept manageable if I could maintain congruence between my beliefs, values and actions. If I could account for anything I did with my heart, head and body, and manage my professional boundaries, then I could ride any situation that came my way. The first-person action research methods described in Part B therefore had to be constant companions in my strategy, from testing my motives for the initial entry, then negotiating many other entries, to dealing with various types of ending. With this disaster response, I was far more rigorous than before in keeping time-lines with multiple columns to note personal reactions and insights. When I was exhausted, I used images and key words to aid my recall of events and reactions. The regular use of my associates, professional and personal friends for second-person enquiry helped to prevent self-delusion and add insights from their perspectives. The account in Story Box 21 shows how I used 'in- the-moment' action inquiry to manage myself as I dealt with a new organisation, new people and a new disaster situation.

### STORY BOX 21

#### MEETING THE UNKNOWN WITH ACTION INQUIRY

*"Walking down the corridor to the first of several 'defusing', information and problem-solving sessions for school Principals, I mirrored their fears of helplessness and incompetence we were there to allay. I had no idea how many would turn up and I was fearful of the denial and resistance I might meet. Questions ran through my head, 'Would the room be suitable and set up? Who would be present to introduce us?' We had a few plans up our sleeves, but everything might need to be changed. I grabbed a few moments in the Ladies to practise techniques to prepare myself, check and deal with negative feelings and offer my work to the greater good for a purpose that transcended my own. Paul and I did a quick exchange of observations and feelings as we tuned in to the atmosphere as people arrived. We also had to give attention to the people needing to engage with us. Mr Y, who was there to introduce us, fussed around and talked incessantly. I did my best to calm him down. That's when I noticed my experience taking over. Taking responsibility and leading was never my non-crisis forte, but when all around are terrified and uncertain, I take the power of my expertise, designated role and experience and take charge gently, but firmly, until others are ready to allow me to drop back into my preferred role. When I stood up to address the audience, I felt another force take over and carry me through."*

– Taken from records, 1998

From past experience, I had learnt the importance of having good physical and logistical back-up when engaged in intense, distressing work. I had to argue my case not to do such a potentially large piece of work alone, and as a result funding was granted so that I could always have an associate with me. Unusually, the stress of having to ask for resources to do our job was taken away as we were provided with a car, good accommodation and designated clerical support and co-ordinator without having to ask for it. The clerical team was excellent and they also provided us with valuable information about the history and dynamics of the organisation that helped defuse anxieties about aspects of the system that puzzled us.

### **Inter-personal issues and organisational dynamics**

One of the most challenging tasks was managing my personal reactions to behaviours and statements that made us vulnerable to being caught in existing interpersonal dynamics in the organisation. They also challenged my ability to be respectful of others. The disaster stress made existing dynamics more degenerative.

Many stresses resulted because of the choice of one particular person linking us to the rest of the organisation. This appointment had been made for reasons of organisational politics rather than suitability for the role. The clerical team had warned us of this person's inefficiencies and they did what they could to help. We noticed the resistance of this person to our presence in the incongruence between his actions and words, for example not being present to introduce us to a new group and breaking confidentiality to the extent that we often felt he was 'laying mines' for us with other managers. Occasions like this were usually resolved after my colleague and I set up peer-enquiries to work out what was really going on at an organisational and personal level so that we could de-personalise situations and deal with them clearly.

Another critical moment occurred when I discovered that many of the information booklets I had prepared for schools and support agencies had not been sent out as promised. No one knew where the person had gone, the senior officer was in Belfast, and I was about to leave Omagh, not knowing if the contract would be extended. I therefore broke the boundaries of always working through the designated management lines and asked the clerical staff to take the papers off his desk and send them out. I knew this carried a risk for me, but the schools had been promised this information several weeks before and needed it to deal with immediate issues. At this point I could not tell whether the officer's inaction was due to sabotage (having already experienced

several acts of sabotage), inefficiency or a symptom of being overwhelmed by the disaster.

Situations such as this caused me more stress than working with the direct distress of the bomb. The resonance with my Hungerford experience reactivated old feelings and fuelled my reactions. I was again faced with the conflicting interests of an organisation and the needs of the community it was there to serve. I had to draw on a variety of processing methods and channels of knowing to manage my own reactions. In some cases this involved changing my attitudes and behaviour, but at other times, these could not be changed without addressing issues at an organisational level and occasionally at a higher political level.

One example occurred at the interface between managing myself and managing the task and process in my reactions to the decisions taken about extending our contract. The following account contain only the bare outlines of this example as there were many other details that I do not feel at liberty to expose in an open document:

*"The senior manager in charge of the contract had spent a lot of unofficial time with us over meals showing great interest in our work, but he was rarely in the office and had not set up a disaster response team of senior managers for regular briefings meetings. The disaster response work was still seen as something that should disrupt normal routines as little as possible. Although he had personally valued our work, he was unable to enact his insight and we could not obtain an answer about our contract before we left after the first phase. We knew from previous experience how much harder it would be once we had left. When he finally phoned to express doubts about the need for more, it still came as a shock and I fought hard to deal with my own reactivity. I then had to work on a strategy for changing his mind, helped by my 'internal ally' who had negotiated my initial entry. Knowing that other agencies and schools we had not yet had time to visit wanted us to return was a tremendous support. I recognised the personal factors driving me too. This was the best chance I had ever had of seeing a response through to a reasonable point and testing learning from previous disasters. It was also a source of material for this thesis."*

I employed these strategies to manage my reactions:

- the BE FIT & Phys model to turn my reactivity to more positive feelings and action

- my networks in Omagh to make representations on our behalf.
- my BE FIT &Phys model to work out how I could regain rapport with the senior manager. Rational arguments did not seem to work. I had experienced him as a man of vision and passion and I knew I had to appeal to his belief channel and talk in a language which made him feel recognised. As he was a classicist, I chose a conceptual framework for continuing the work, drawing on the classical metaphor of my adaptation of Handy's 'gods of management' ideas (Handy, 1989) to disaster management (Capewell, 1992). I also used the Trauma Process Model to illustrate the need for a transitional period from our work in the early aftermath to the medium-term stage of response.

I used the classical metaphor again in my letter and when he phoned back. I could hear the change in his voice as I spoke in a language he related to and I knew we would be returning. However, the delay meant the opportunity for a more planned approach we had wanted had gone. On our return, it was encouraging that our stay was extended by a day and I was asked to prepare a long-term proposal. Therefore, the phone call a week later saying our contract would not be continued struck me like a thunderbolt from the blue. The reason given was that *"school Principals had reported that everyone was coping and any pupils needing help were receiving it"*. I knew there had been no systematic means of reaching this conclusion. Primary schools, and schools outside of the town had not been consulted and Youth workers and several school Principals still wanted our help. Later I was told that only a few Principles had actually been consulted.

This decision, or rather the manner in which it was made, sent me into reactivity and unproductive circular thinking from which I felt I could not escape and which would send me crazy. It re-stimulated deep emotions from my Hungerford experiences and it felt as if nothing had changed after 11 years of trying to make things better for young people after disaster. The old dilemmas were still unresolved: *How could people be persuaded to take preventative action against repercussions that they had not yet experienced and which they did not want to believe would happen to their community? How could you persuade senior managers to learn from the experience of past disasters? How could you persuade them to believe what we had heard in private from Principals and teachers who were too afraid to expose their vulnerability to managers who might judge them?*

I had to make an effort to manage my despair and discovered how my Trauma Process Map could be used for breaking my negative cycles of thinking. I sensed there was little hope of changing the senior manager's mind for a second time as the community were at the stage of superficial restoration and apparent normality before the longer term impact had become visible. However, I managed my reactions sufficiently to send a letter acknowledging the difficult position he was in and offering my insights into the dynamics of the situation. I also wanted to cover my professional back by having in writing that the decision had gone against my recommendations and those of other local professionals, as well as against disaster management theory.

I knew this premature ending was part of the disaster process and that managers had the right to exercise their free will, but I had an unhelpful tendency to feel I had failed the work. I was somewhat consoled by the two new contracts being negotiated for work with schools in different Education Authorities and the fact that some of the work we had started would continue because we had succeeded in empowering local professionals. However, the management of my reactions was necessary for some time. I employed these strategies:

- tracking back to make connections with similar past experiences and basic life patterns, such as not being believed and then trying to prove myself.
- making more cognitive sense of what happened. A book published in the next year (Zinner & Williams, 1999) provided me with a key phrase, coined by responders in schools affected by the Oklahoma bomb, that summed up the Omagh position:  
*“school Principals used their own coping styles and ideas as yardsticks to evaluate and make decisions regarding the emotional needs of children in their schools, in spite of advice from people who had been working directly with children”* (Sitterle & Gurwitch, 1999: 186).
- Checking with local sources to see if children and schools had really recovered so quickly. I heard and read about a number of suicides of young people in the next few months and the increase in young people seeking help from the Trauma Centre. These young people complained that schools were only interested in school work and exam grades and they could not concentrate on anything else except the bomb. The large-scale Omagh Community Study (Sperrin HSCT, 1999) and Omagh Children's Study (Sperrin HSCT, 2000) confirmed that many people were still suffering and had not accessed specific trauma help.
- Keeping in touch with my professional networks in Omagh and hearing that some aspects of the work we facilitated continued, such as collaborative groups between



teachers and the Community Oral Archive was co-ordinated by the Library Service. After some months, schools requested visits from the Trauma team staff, though this placed an extra burden on them. A special 'trauma' youth worker was also appointed as recommended, though it took a year. In 1999, the Chief Executive and my 'internal ally', the Director of Community Care, wrote a joint strategy to address the needs of children and young people (Martin & Bolton, 1999) and they also joint-funded a cyber café staffed by a youth worker with links to the Trauma Centre.

- Writing to the Northern Ireland Minister for Education, John McFall MP to gain a meeting to discuss policy issues that this premature closure of the response raised. The meeting was cancelled because of his withdrawal on the re-establishment of Northern Ireland Assembly.
- Making contact with an academic researcher at a Belfast university who had measured high rates of trauma in a survey of schools (Purcell, 2001). At the point he felt he was making progress with the Education Boards, they suddenly withdrew interest (personal communication).
- Having my work acknowledged and used at a national level by the Irish Teachers' Unions and the Ulster Teachers' Union, reminded me that there were others who valued what we had done (Capewell, 2000a).
- Using the experience for more general learning about the process of disaster work.

As I had found before with the conflicts with bosses, real healing only came with some acknowledgement from the person behind the action that caused the hurt. Two years after the bomb, I was in Omagh as part of another contract and using a building owned by the Education Board. I was in a canteen queue and when I turned round came face to face with the senior manager that had discontinued our work. In his surprise (he had no idea I was in Ireland), his first words were *"you know everything you and Sue warned us about has happened, especially the fragmentation in the community."* A year later I was back in Omagh en route to work in Donegal. I invited him for a meal and he presented me with a beautiful print, painted by an artist in memory of the people killed by the bomb, in recognition of what we had achieved.

### **Finding personal support**

Gaining personal care and support was at times difficult and a pattern emerged that when I needed it most, things happened to exaggerate my need. Inefficiencies in the hotel meant that I had to give the staff their early morning call if we were to be sure breakfast would be cooked; my day off was interrupted by a hoax bomb alert that kept me separated from my belongings and car for nearly five hours; and when I escaped to

a special, nurturing guest house in Donegal for a second time, the proprietress was having a breakdown and was angry I was there. Nearly every other place I stayed seemed to be run by a bereaved parent or someone connected to the bomb who needed to offload their stories on me. The wild beaches and hills were my saving. I had to draw deeply into my personal reserves and compartmentalise all the other things going on at home, such as my son leaving home for University and the health and accommodation problems of my elderly mother-in-law. During a reflexology session, I had my blood pressure taken and discovered it was very high – a problem I had never envisaged having, but an impact of the stressful work that I could not deny.

### **Dealing with 'stuck' images**

Images from often repeated stories of the dead and injured also began to get stuck in my memory. I managed these with the first and second person enquiry. One image involved a person with horrific injuries so I asked my colleague Sue, who had experience in hospital work, how the injuries would be treated. As she told me, I noticed how the stuck image was shifting as I mentally transferred the patient to hospital and had the injuries cleaned and repaired. I adapted this method of 'rolling the film on' for other stuck images. However, one image was burnt too deeply in my brain. It concerned a girl who had been blinded by the bomb and had become an icon of a 'brave survivor' in the disaster. During a CARPP conference, a colleague offered to facilitate my process to deal with this image. As we sat on a grassy bank I heard water trickling nearby and, encouraged by Geoff (his presence, more than words), I tried to 'wash away the image'. I could not do this until I realised that I needed to honour the pain of the girl first and that letting go of the image felt like a betrayal of her experience. I therefore also had to re-frame my 'stuck' guilt cognitively by telling myself that keeping it would neither help her nor myself. The ritual worked for me and I have used it many times since to encourage people to create their own self-help techniques.

## **SPHERE 2: MANAGING THE TASK**

Action research methods aided my work from the start. I used my learning about 'entry' (see p.206) and contracting from previous cycles of action and reflection and paid close attention to 'drip feeding' information to the potential clients so they could understand what was being offered without being overwhelmed. This information also included simple suggestions for tasks that could begin the process of assessing the impact on schools and staff in the different Departments and services for which the Board had a

duty of care. Some staff were victims, some were bereaved and some, in the Omagh Library in particular, had been heavily involved in the immediate rescue and recovery.

On arrival in Omagh, there was no time to lose after the initial meetings with senior managers. Their expectation for immediate action, and probably immediate solutions, was high. The size of the task, and the urgency to support schools before the approaching first day of term, meant that I had to act quickly. In such circumstances, the combination of adrenalin, fear (of the unknown and the high expectations), and the confidence and knowledge gained from previous disasters concentrates my mind so that my whole body is receptive. It focuses on the task in hand, but not the task in isolation from the past, future and other current issues. I experience a rapid flow of consciousness born of the need to perform the task and my need to survive, protecting myself and colleagues from the pitfalls discovered in similar situations in the past.

This stream of consciousness allows all the verbal and non-verbal cues around to be caught up in the stream until they emerge as spontaneous, intuitive feelings, then images, thoughts and actions. Many things are absorbed – what people say, the congruence and incongruence between actions and words, the patterns of relationships, the significant moments and the insignificant periods between, the metaphor, the atmosphere (which after a disaster is so emotionally laden that it can be touched, smelt and tasted), the taken for granted artefacts and rituals of the organisation, its rules, its quirks and especially how I experience the place and the people and their interactions with me. I allow myself to experience unchecked, then make myself detach, using several **first-person** detachment techniques (section B4) to gain different perspectives on the situation. If there is time, I draw on my training in Adlerian individual Psychology and try to work out the underlying purposes or goals of behaviour. In this way I pick up attitudes towards us as external consultants, relationship dynamics and politics within and between agencies, as well as attitudes towards the disaster and the response. I check my observations and feelings in **second-person enquiries** with my colleagues and listen to theirs, noting the differences, always mindful that we can both be wrong.

This '**in the moment research**' is only '**for the moment**' and may not be valid for the moment after. Even in the moment when the action occurred, the research had to continue as if in constant flow to check that the right assumptions and decisions were made and to adapt to the nuances of the reality. Such moments arise from necessity

when there is no time to plan or when the plans can only be sketches because so much is uncertain.

To give some certainty to the unknown situation in Omagh, I produced an initial strategy of enquiry, rather than prescribed activity, that allowed for plenty of variety in the way it was undertaken. I described it in terms of the 'making a path' metaphor as follows:

- Establishing the right of way and boundaries, designing blueprints for action.
- Assessing the situation and the work to be done using the Trauma Process Map, circles of vulnerability and the S-S CIRA concepts
- Outreach to the community as a whole using Kfir's crisis intervention model and my '*Bridging the Gap*' and '*Fishing Nets and Stepping Stones*' models.
- Targeting the parts of the community that were more vulnerable to strong reactions and might require reactive as well as proactive support.
- Consolidating the work and reviewing the next paths.

I will expand on the phases of this strategy more fully, though several phases usually operated alongside each other.

### **Phase 1: Gaining entry and establishing boundaries and ways of working together.**

From the start of negotiations with the Education Board, the task was to assist the Board in working out how they could best respond to the impact of the disaster using me in '*the role of facilitator and catalyst to mobilise, co-ordinate and support existing local resources*' (contract proposal, 1998). In this statement, I was communicating my intention to walk alongside in partnership with the Board in a way that was grounded in their context and did not impose prescriptive answers. This idea had to be reinforced many times when I felt that what was really wanted was a magic wand to make everything better within a few days. I noticed the dilemma for someone hoping to work democratically using action research, but I persisted in not giving the client what they believed they wanted because it was impossible. Part of the walking alongside was a gentle process of education knowing that clients often changed what they wanted as they moved further out of the initial shock. As Sela had found in Israel, sometimes a 'therapeutic dialogue' has to be set up with the educational system as the 'identified patient' if the agreed aim of restoration is to be achieved (Sela, 1993: 95-97).

Ways of working with my associates was another aspect of the management of task. I had worked with the three with me in Omagh before and we were at ease with each other. They were all people with their own skills and their own independent businesses or jobs. We had a mutual arrangement whereby we assisted in each other's work as associates rather than as co-workers so accepted that we had unequal responsibilities and roles. Whoever was responsible for gaining and managing the contract led the work and the assistants fitted in. This arrangement worked well for disaster contracts there was little time for preparation and their presence was intermittent. As the one constant person keeping the Omagh contract together, I had to rely heavily on intuition and take full responsibility for what I did, but my associates always tempered my insights. The fact that they left and returned meant they could see the situation with an outsider's vision. I had chosen my associates because their attitudes and approaches were congruent with mine and because they had a solid professional background and inside experience of disaster work. They all had skills which were complementary to mine and I tried to match them to specific areas of work where they could excel. All of my associates understood the need for constant dialogue and co-supervision - as we worked and at the end of each day and contract. We all met after each contract in a co-enquiry group.

### **Phase 2: Assessing the situation**

My strategy of action research to approach this uncertain contract had to begin with assessments of all aspects of the disaster, resources (including myself), contexts and affected people, using my S-S CIRA model (formulated but not yet named as such) as a guide. Initially, I used information gleaned from the media and local contacts to map spatial data and record other information that might be relevant, bearing in mind questions such as *"What is the significance of this disaster?"* that helped me make tentative connections to prepare my mind. Once in Omagh, the only way to build on these first assessments was to draw others into a collaborative exercise so that many more people would be contributing to the data collection and thinking.

### **Phase 3: Outreach to the community: Collaborative enquiry groups.**

I held in my mind the maps and models described in Part D. I was 'Bridging the Gap' by helping local services (schools, libraries, youth services, community groups, and churches) to create systems and empower their staff to assess needs and serve their community as conduits of information, ideas and support (Kfir, 1988). Work with other professionals, such as psychologists and the multi-agency team, none of whom had specific training in disaster response, were used to encourage them to create

accessible services or to be pro-active in reaching out into the community. I used the Trauma Process Map to outline the process ahead and showed how it could be used to plan services and apply them at appropriate times. The map proved to be a means of rapid engagement of the audiences.

Our first meetings with key personnel in the Education and Libraries Board (the Board of Governors, Heads of Service; teams of support services, such as Advisors; school Principals and Governors) began the process of establishing our presence as credible, acceptable external facilitators, but also served to gather information about the system and the impact on key managers and staff. Similar sessions were held with community group leaders and clergy, who often chaired school Boards. In addition, the meetings provided the means of defusing their shock, mobilising their own systems and creating 'agents of recovery' who could help us in achieving the task throughout this widespread system. An example of one of these sessions, in this case with school Principals, is given in Story Box 22 on the following page.

The first task was to encourage the mapping of 'circles of vulnerability' in the central administration, the schools, youth centres and libraries. The 'agents' would then be asked to do the same for the schools, libraries and youth centres. Initial mapping could be done from what people already knew, but this could only be tentative. We passed on ideas about the pro-active 'casting of nets' in a variety of forms that enabled information to be gathered using any sources and forum open to them in their normal roles, such as groups set up to give information, parents' meetings and just listening attentively to conversations. These in turn became the 'stepping stones' to the next level of help for those who needed it. The Educational Psychology Service and Welfare Officers were in a position to gain more specific information, and handbooks were written to help them do so. Other information packs were written for teachers and youth workers.

We could not force anyone to do any of these things in an unprepared system with untrained managers and no crisis management procedures to enforce them. However, information and ideas had been injected into many parts of the organisation and embryonic systems had been created. Handbooks had been written to ensure every service leader and every school and college Principal had good quality information on which to base decisions, whether or not they could attend the meetings. Certain key people in services that had a very important role to play had done nothing before our arrival, and some still refused to accept that they had a vital role, but at least now some

of their staff felt moved to act in spite of their resistant managers. The fact that our work was backed by the Education Board gave them strength to do what they could.

## STORY BOX 22

### 'CREATING COLLABORATIVE ENQUIRERS'

*It was 10 days after the bombing, schools were still on holiday and meetings were held to bring School Principals and Deputies together....*

*'...emotions were high and I sensed exhaustion, uncertainty and shock. They first needed to know who we were, what we were there to do and our perspective on the role of schools. Boundaries had to be set to make this a safe space. For most, this was the first time they had stopped for reflection since the bomb.*

*In the presentation, I used metaphor as a gentle way of imparting information about the impact of disaster and to explain the different coping strategies that people would use, with the consequences of over-use of certain styles. Suggesting that the same or similar images could be used in school gave them a practical reason for listening attentively. I chose the metaphor of an unwanted parcel with unknown contents that couldn't be returned and asked them to reflect on all the different responses to the parcel and the consequences of each. This coaxed the audience naturally into active participation. Further questions were posed that implied the possibility of choice and creative solutions, thus promoting the idea that, with some basic information and concepts, their ideas could be as good as mine.*

*Term would soon start and Principals would soon be overrun with other school business and a desire to return to normal, so I used my **Trauma Response Map** to give an overview of the long-term process and how healthy choices could be promoted at key points. It facilitated participation and gave relief that they could take positive action to help. It provoked a change in mood and questions began to be asked.*

*Questions were gathered, the most urgent one being, 'What do we do on the first day back at school?' I used this to model the need for collaborative problem-solving, referring to key school response principles, rather than fixed answers. Principals were thus given digestible tips, related to their most pressing concern. Our enquiring questions encouraged them to think through their own solutions so we did not attract the 'yes, but' and 'it wouldn't work in our school' responses. We encouraged them to continue meeting in this way to share ideas and support each other. I ended by affirming their capacity to find a way through together, and, without denying the horror of the incident and the dark days ahead, I chose words of encouragement that suggested hope for the future.' - Taken from records, 1998.*

#### **Phase 4: Targeting specific needs**

Following these initial 'cover-all' meetings, sessions were given to target specific needs. First, opportunities were given for **personal processing of reactions** for any members of staff, either in individual sessions or small groups, for example, of school Principals. We knew the stigma of asking for personal help was such that we would not be overwhelmed, but the meetings acted as a symbol that staff had 'permission' to be personally affected. The sessions meant a great deal to those who came, and in turn provided us with more information and, sometimes, more contact with their schools. Some of the Library staff who were bereaved and injured by the bomb, witnesses or rescuers, came for several individual sessions and we were the stepping stones to more specialist help for them. They gave us insights from the heart of the impact, especially about cultural issues that helped and hindered recovery. I learnt that the disruption of disaster could render even large, 'close-knit' families temporarily unsupportive to the member affected.

One group of Library and Education HQ staff that were sent to me, without reference to my criteria for doing so, tested my facilitation skills and this is retold in Story Box 23 on the following page. This group session provided a rich experience that could not have happened with a perfectly run situation or with controlled, standardised procedures. It was made possible by the action research approach, with its accommodation of emergent events and tools that enabled me to deal with the unexpected. The session defused anger and fear, replacing it with insight and understanding that prevented divisions between people becoming a problem and moved them to the next stage of their journeys. It also provided me with evidence of a difficult to pin down dynamic and a learning story to pass on to others.

Second, we began to book **outreach sessions** for visits to specific schools to share our information with school staff teams, 'defuse' reactions and give support targeted to the needs of the schools. These visits took us into the heart of the communities and provided more information about needs and community dynamics that we could feedback to the senior managers and to the multi-agency response team. Every school had a different culture, a different relationship to the disaster and different needs. Action research strategies were essential to our ability to manage each task. We rushed from one part of County Tyrone to another and, on one occasion, to County Donegal in the Irish Republic. Second person reflections and preparation were done as we drove from school to school.



**STORY BOX 23****BRIDGING THE DIVISIONS**

*'I was asked to see a group of Library staff. During the round of introductions, it became clear that other types of HQ staff had also been told to attend. Of more concern was the massive difference in their relationship to the bomb. They fell into three distinct groups: relatives of the bereaved and injured; witnesses and rescuers; those who were away from Omagh at the time of the bomb. The 'hierarchy of suffering' dynamic was activated in several ways. Each group had a reason why the group was obviously not for them – either they did not want 'to intrude on others' grief', or they had no right to be present because they weren't even there at the time. I had to deal with my negative thoughts about how the session had been 'sold' to staff and my concern that personal needs were too diverse for personal work in a short session. I could have abandoned the session, but I also knew the group were linked by their anger at their organisation for 'having done nothing for them', for jokes being made by some managers about the bomb, and the lack of recognition of the stress created by continued and regular hoax bomb warnings. I was galvanised into action when I realised that what we could have in this group was a microcosm of post-disaster community divisions that are created between groups with different experiences. While I felt my way into how I should continue the session, I shared this insight with the group and suggested we could try to deal with the issue we had in front of us – how to build bridges of communication across the barriers felt between each group.*

*Using past learning from group facilitation, I invited each group to say something about their special perspective, followed by questions from the rest for clarification.*

*Tensions relaxed once they had some insight about each other. I asked each group to talk about what they most needed from the other groups. In order to equalise the giving and receiving of support, I then asked each to say what they could give to the others.*

*Now that the barriers were down, it was possible to talk more about the barriers to defuse their power further. - Taken from my records, 1998*

Action inquiry approaches helped us to keep our focus and pay acute attention to every cue as we approached and entered each school. Every school needed a different entry process and we used my three models of school response as a quick method of classification and to guess the degree of preparedness and level of receptiveness and resistance we might encounter. In turn, I gained a great deal of knowledge to add to my existing store about schools after disaster.

Only one school we visited had any existing crisis plans and it was noticeable that it was this school that welcomed us most warmly, asked most questions and made best

use of what we offered. They were also a school badly hit by the disaster, but their culture and the healthy dynamics between senior managers and staff made for an excellent recovery environment for their injured and bereaved pupils. Information sent to me several years later showed they created a varied, co-ordinated and long-term recovery programme. Another school, badly hit by the disaster, had no plans, but had been involved in piloting a scheme for developing emotional literacy. This had prepared them well for dealing with emotional issues. Our session there was particularly moving and the culture and atmosphere demanded an approach that reached emotional and spiritual places not possible elsewhere. This was the first of many visits to the school.

Other schools were more challenging. In one, our invitation had come from the Vice Principal and, en route to the school, the Principal phoned to say we were not needed. When we negotiated a return and a meeting with the Principal, we discovered a person with deep past traumas reactivated by the bombing. These reactions were producing attitudes and divisions that were causing major splits in the staff team who were desperate for assistance. Reactivation of hidden events, often from long ago and related to the 'Troubles', occurred with several Principals. In one school, we were met with a sullen silence from staff that required a lot of internal processing by ourselves to manage. We offered sessions for individuals and during one of these, we were given information that helped us understand the roots of the resistance. A tragedy closer to home had occurred three months before and the repercussions were still unfolding. A pupil was one of two young people in custody accused of assisting an adult in the torture and murder of a pregnant teenager. The impact of this trauma, more personal to the school than the impact of the bomb, appeared to be blocking any work on the bomb and needed to be dealt with first.

The benefits of action research in this phase of the task were harvested mainly by my team and our closest allies in the wider response. We could not have been so responsive to so many different situations without it. The sessions repeated in such different schools provided us with divergent opportunities to test out and refine existing ideas. In a prepared, organised system, the information gained could have been collected and processed by the senior management team and used to inform decisions and services that in turn could have helped the schools more. Key personnel in each school could have formed supported collaborative enquiry groups for greater learning from each other.

Two schools did take up the opportunity for further work with us. This work led to two long-term contracts with spin-offs into the communities they served and other professional agencies at a local, regional and national level. Our work in one school is the source for the story in section E3. Suffice to say here that with the pulsed programme of work, we were able to set in motion cycles of action research with staff teams and supporting professionals which ranged over many of Torbert's '27 domains of action inquiry' (Chandler & Torbert, 2003). We used dialogue with individuals in the process of establishing needs and gaining entry to the contracts and mapping techniques to process the history of the teams and the disaster experience. Team enquiries, often using group sculpting, were used to expose current issues. In addition group sessions for managers helped clarify the context of the schools and gave opportunities to gently process their disaster reactions with the hope that they would make less reactive and more rational decisions based on good information. As the contracts proceeded, wider networks were created for multi-way information exchange with parents, other professionals and key parts of the community. Once current problems had been managed, and as the contracts drew to an end, we created exercises with the staff teams to envision the future and look at how they could realise their dreams. Finally, attention was given to the wider system (the Education Board in one case, and a Health Board in the other) by involving key managers in mapping the 'journeys' they and their staff had taken since the bomb. The maps were then used to investigate how the learning could be taken into the future, in one case, via the Unions, into schools at a national level.

Thirdly, as we moved around the organisation, we acted as **problem-solving consultants** for professionals with specific issues that had emerged. Many of these presented new situations for ourselves, so we had to employ **dialogue** techniques for joint exploration of the issue, using organisational and disaster recovery principals as a check against which the person could find their solutions. Youth workers for example were being bombarded with invitations from well-meaning groups in England and elsewhere to take groups of bereaved and injured children for a holiday, as illustrated in the story in Story Box 24.

A similar approach was used to help the Chief Executive deal with the 'walk-about' by President Clinton and a large entourage of UK and US dignitaries, a time consuming task that took him away from other duties. The organisers had asked him to select school-children to line the route. We provided the expertise that took away his stress

**STORY BOX 24****REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE: TURNING MINEFIELDS INTO GOLD MINES**

*"Such trips to strange families and places, packed full of free gifts and high profile meetings with dignitaries (including a visit to Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister) had the potential to create more personal stress and jealousies with siblings and friends and more work for the already overwhelmed youth workers. But they were publicly offered and difficult to refuse. Together, we were able to look at the different options and consequences, then work out an action plan, bearing in mind our principle that, for any issue, it is possible to anticipate likely problems, take action to prevent them, manage the task, then review and deal with any consequences. Having this kind of structure meant that feelings of helplessness and despair could be transformed into guided reflection and action throughout the whole process, even if problems arose. Eventually, the trip went ahead. Problems did arise on the journey, but they were handled calmly, not reactively, and parents reported that their children were more confident and had made new friends as a result. The trip acted not just as a distraction from the heaviness at home but also as a bridge to the world beyond the disaster. The youth workers acknowledged that our problem-solving dialogues had given them the confidence to go ahead with the trips."*

- Taken from field records, 1998

and helped him take action to ensure the children chosen were well supported during the visit and teachers could deal with the jealousies of those not chosen.

**Phase 5: Consolidating the work and reviewing the next paths.**

This was the aspect of the work where the lack of a systematic, pre-planned response meant that we could not use useful action research methods to review the work at the end of the first visit to Omagh to plan the next stage in a meaningful way with all parties. We were however, able to build this into our subsequent contracts with other Boards, making use of collaborative mapping of the process from which action planning for the future could proceed.

In the first contract we had to resort to creating and taking spontaneous opportunities to ensure the threads of the embryonic work were not lost. In addition to the methods of persuasion to keep the contract alive, described earlier in this section, I used action inquiry to attend to many levels (personal, interpersonal and strategic) so I could use the present as a step to the future. In the sensitive post-disaster atmosphere,

spontaneously created moments like these have two advantages. First, defensive reactions are reduced and second, overburdened professionals have to make no effort to make contact. An example occurred during the long wait for President Clinton to arrive. I was present to support staff and children, but I saw the opportunity to consolidate relationships already made in the earlier sessions. Some Principals had hinted at wanting further support but had not yet contacted us. I was aware of their work pressures and chasing them too much would have been counterproductive. Here we had the chance to bump into each other while sharing the common experience of waiting endlessly for the President. In this way the work in the school in County Donegal was consolidated, without which all the subsequent work influencing the community, the Health Board and, through the Unions, the Irish schools (Capewell, 2000a) would not have happened.

My awareness of the need for multiple loop action alerted me to the need for the two schools from different Education Authorities to have their longer-term response managed within their own system, especially as their direct managers were becoming part of their problems. This also gave me leverage for staying within the work, even if the first contract ended prematurely, as I suspected it might. By staying in tune with the process, I was ready to introduce the logical arguments and practical steps required for this to happen as soon as the Principals began to realise and mention the need themselves.

### **SPHERE 3: MANAGING CONTEXTS**

Managing each community context of the disaster involved two core convictions from all my previous experience. First, that individual recovery cannot be isolated from wider social, political and economic contexts. Second, that communities can only be reached via individuals and agencies of which the communities are composed. I needed methods that enabled me to research and respond rapidly to the whole and the parts. Techniques described in section B4, such as the Yoga of Participation, the use of metaphor and making symbolic representations of what I hear and feel about a context allowed information to surface quickly, though tentatively. Refinements were made as more information was gained. I also used the models of Schein (1985) and Hawkins (learnt from consultancy sessions and working alongside him) that ensured I drew conclusions about the culture of different contexts from five sources (Hawkins and Shohet, 2000: 169) – the visible artefacts, behavioural patterns and norms, mindsets

that show how the world is viewed, the emotional ground that shapes meaning, and the motivational roots behind aspirations and choices. I added these to the factual data and maps I drew about all aspects of the community in its disaster and pre-disaster state.

### **Boundaries between different contexts**

During my post-bomb work, I sometimes had separate contracts for work in different contexts, such as a school or with community forum, but this was not always so. At other times, I had to take care to remember the differences between, for example, general community settings or a work-place setting, where managers had a duty of care to staff and staff had a right to personal privacy. Working in the public sector required an awareness of slow decision making processes, involving community representatives and committees, and of the duty of care to the people in the community they were serving. Schools were particularly complex contexts in which many boundaries and sensitivities had to be remembered and managed. For example, in one school, the duty of care to staff conflicted with the wish of a minority to deny the impact of the bomb on themselves and the school. This conflicted with the need of the school team to support each other and to provide a strong support system for teaching children who were severely affected by the bomb. The private denial then imposed denial on the rest of the school community, thus threatening the healthy recovery of the school community and individuals. I was also working with schools with different management systems, schools managed by three different agencies, two town communities and schools in different countries with different education and political systems, plus several village and Townland<sup>1</sup> communities.

### **Wider social and political contexts**

Behind all these specific and local contexts, I had to retain an awareness of the wider social and political context, especially the sectarian history of Northern Ireland which gave rise to current sensitivities around language and place and personal names. The political context accounted for the incident itself and the significance of its timing that caused such a loss of hope. In the same way that these wider contexts affected the daily lives and identity of people and communities we worked with, how we could practise in different places was affected by the fact that people from different traditions used different churches, GP services, schools and community facilities.

Gender was another aspect of the wider social context that affected how we were perceived and what we did. This part of Northern Ireland still operated in a patriarchal

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<sup>1</sup> Townlands, the smallest local political unit in Ireland, inspire a strong sense of belonging.

manner in many places, though we also discovered strong feminist activism in some community groups and amongst some Catholic nuns. However, many women we worked with still felt their voices were not heard and they were quite fearful of challenging male authority figures at work and home. Being a female consultant meant I could be dismissed as an irrelevant, powerless female by some people, but to others, especially when our power was felt, we became the personification of many negative projections about women. It did mean that I had easy access to grass-roots, mainly female, networks. Gender issues were present at the heart of our operation - the clerical staff working for us were all female and referred to as 'the girls' while managers were, with a very few exceptions, were male and referred to as 'Mr...'. We asked the women if they had noticed this and they replied, *"Oh yes, but we are allowed to call them by their Christian names at Christmas"*, as if this made it acceptable. We knew our questions were raising gender awareness and that our presence might be seen as a threat to the established order. With some managers, this was happening already, judging by how consciously we had to avoid falling into gender traps.

### **Reaching the hidden parts of the context.**

Given the complexity of the situation, action research provided the philosophical framework for our wish to include voices from as many of these contexts as possible, especially those that might be hidden or ignored. I chose to have our *"ears opened to testimonies of real survivors"* and to pierce the *"silences that underpin disaster work ....to suit other, often hidden, agenda."* (Hewitt, 1995:326-7) so that I could channel these back to decision makers to inform their actions. To do this we encouraged teachers to attend to every pupil in their classes by using the class triage exercise, and in the community it was done by creating 'agents of recovery' in agencies that reached into the heart of the system, such as schools, youth clubs, libraries and community groups.

We discovered that certain groups and issues were given a great deal of attention, while others had little. Children in many schools had their 'disaster' voices denied and we noticed that more attention seemed to be given to secondary schools than to primary and special schools. In one primary school, therapeutic help was offered to two girls, but not an equally affected younger boy. Villages outside Omagh also felt unheard and transport problems meant that support services were difficult to reach. Adolescents' needs were particularly difficult to represent. To reach them, we advocated more support for youth workers who were in a strategic position, for example, to take immediate action if suicide was threatened. Our suggestion to appoint

an extra outreach youth worker was met with the comment, "*but they are only a small section of the community*". We argued that their reactions and behaviour could cause far greater distress in families and the community than their numbers warranted. After much delay, an appointment was made a year later.

### **Reaching the community through informal sources.**

Though our outreach was done mainly through the agency of others, we made every effort to hear stories directly from local people. Wherever we went, I was surprised how freely people talked about their experiences and I also became aware that the surface only had to be scratched a little by saying who we were for many levels of traumatic experience from thirty years of civil unrest to be exposed. Our sources also included people with their ear to the ground, such as cleaners and secretaries in schools, staff in hotels and libraries, people we met in pubs, churches, clubs, shops and leisure places. One conversation struck up in a shop brought to my attention the needs of young people who had lost friends in the bomb and were about to leave home for University in other parts of the UK where the bomb had already become old news. I was reminded of the stress in our family when my daughter left for University four days after her sister's funeral. As a result, I wrote a leaflet, '*Guidelines for school leavers going to University*', which was sent to all schools for distribution. I also contacted the Times Higher Education Supplement who, after strong advocacy, agreed to publish an article (THES, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1998) for the information of institutions receiving students.

The staff I regularly met at the small hotel where I stayed became a regular source of local stories, including those from the business community since the proprietor was Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. This hotel also attracted professionals doing bomb-related work, especially women, and our visits coincided often enough for an informal enquiry and support group to form over breakfast and dinner over the first year. I thus heard stories from journalists and the makers of TV documentaries who became 'counsellors' to many families of the dead and injured who had not yet sought professional support. I gave information and support to help her in this task.

With all these informal channels, I aimed to gain information, but also give information, support and ideas to encourage and inform survivors and the general community. Much of the work involved countering the hierarchy of suffering that was so prominent and reversing the rumours and voyeuristic stories that were spreading fast with positive messages.



### Reaching the community through formal channels

I also took action to influence the community using formal channels. One was to persuade local newspapers to print 'coping tips' for parents, carers, and children themselves' that could reach many people and be cut out and kept for reference. Another was giving information and ideas to the Library Service and Omagh District Council Community Department to create the atmosphere for community generated 'healing activities' to emerge. I cannot tell whether our ideas sparked off the ones that arose in Omagh, such as the pulping of flowers laid in the street for various arts projects, but it may have helped them to be officially accepted. A senior Librarian spoke of her idea for an Oral Archive in the first weeks after the bomb when others were wary of doing so. Believing that such immediate oral history "*born at the moment of disaster and of collective social forgetfulness*" (Meyer et al, 1988: 15) can counter media and official distortions of real stories, I used my experience from Hungerford to provide a cognitive framework for why this would be a useful action. I also connected them to the UK Library Association disaster expert (and former Hungerford Librarian). A plan of action for starting an archive resulted. I also wrote a '*Handbook for Listeners*' (Capewell, 1988) to protect those hearing emotional stories and the members of the community telling them, maybe for the first time. Three years later, I received a CD-Rom, '*One Day in August*' (the Omagh Bomb Archive, 2001) which was the result of a Library instigated and community managed project. Thus the Library produced a platform for anyone to tell their stories, a safe forum for emotional expression and social contact that gave some a social purpose. It was a comprehensive community record of the disaster. Libraries also provided space for other forms of expression, such as arts projects. Their services provided both information that anyone could access and a listening ear in a friendly place that carried no stigma about receiving help.

### The bomb context

While in Omagh, I was totally immersed in the bomb. On one occasion, I was a participator in events and this provided an insight into the post-bomb context of the community. In the example given in Story Box 25 about a hoax bomb scare I show how I automatically went into 'action researcher' mode and also turned my reflections into action and an opportunity for more 'recovery' work.

#### STORY BOX 25

##### THE HOAX: LEARNING THROUGH LIVING IN AN EXPERIENCE

*"I had just started eating Sunday lunch in a café in the centre of Omagh when a police officer rushed in, telling us to leave immediately because of a bomb scare. I started observing my reactions and those of others. As we ran through the kitchens, I noticed all the staff had left, unlike their actions in the bomb warning three weeks before. I noticed my annoyance at leaving my lunch and remembered my work in a restaurant chain where customers carried on eating during raids. I was particularly cross that this was my day off. I watched as frustration began to be tinged with fear and denial that it was a real bomb. We stood outside in the rain and cold, our coats and belongings in the buildings and cars, wondering where to stand and who to believe. (In the real bomb, people had been directed to the site of the bomb.) The groups of shivering people nervously discussed the merits of standing in different places, while some showed off their knowledge – raised windscreen wipers meant that a car had been checked. Watching the reactions of young shop assistants, I realised their raw memories of the bomb were being reactivated, so I checked if this was so and offered support. As we waited and waited, my frustration grew at the absence of information and action. I decided to mobilise action, first by asking the police officers if they had blankets for the shivering young girls (they did not) and then by repeating like a broken record that we needed shelter until we could collect our belongings and staff could close their premises. Eventually it worked and the Police arranged for a Hotel manager to take us to his home while we awaited instructions. By this time the group was bonding into a 'survivor group' – though the camaraderie was muted with the memories of three weeks before. While at his home, the hotelier told me his bomb story and the story of his previous traumas, including the recent suicide of his brother. After four hours, we were able to go back into the town, exhausted and with the knowledge that few are interested in the disruption caused by a hoax. Hoaxes continued to be a major drain on the community for two years.*

*– Taken from my records, 1998*

The only other means of gaining deeper understandings of real-life situations of greater severity than the hoax was by hearing individual and group stories directly. On another occasion, when I worked directly with one school staff team, I learnt that assumptions could easily be made about the disruptions to an organisation or community. On the surface, the context of their bomb story was a little more complex than most incidents affecting a school, as their involvement was indirect. The coach trip that took some of their pupils into Omagh and the heart of the bombing because of an unplanned diversion had been organised by the local Language School with whom the school had close links. Families of school pupils hosted the Spanish students and their teacher was assisting at the school. It was not until the staff were brought together several months after the bomb and began to map their involvement that anyone, including the staff members involved, had any idea of the extent of their total experience.

Vicariously, we became witnesses to the horror of their stories. They had dealt with uncertainty, rushing from hospital to hospital and making desperate phone calls while trying to locate the dead and injured children; the awfulness of breaking news to parents; meeting the returning uninjured, but traumatised, children; and the horror of accompanying shocked parents in the reception centre and then on the long walk down a corridor to the mortuary to identify a body. Then they had to return home to deal with the reactions of the community, visits by dignitaries and media demands. All this was in addition to dealing with their own reactions and those of their school community as well as preparing as usual for the new school term.

## **Conclusion**

In the short and long-term response to the Omagh bomb, action research was therefore crucial to my role and task as a practitioner working in far from ideal circumstances in a situation with many unknowns, uncertainties and emerging twists and turns. Without its approach and methods, I could not have gained my initial entry, established a presence and worked with so many variables and contexts. It helped myself and my associates walk alongside key parts of several communities to help them process the experience of the bomb, pick up threads from the past and weave them into their future. Action research enabled me to take care of myself and team, using our bodies, skills and past and present experiences as resources for our practice so that we could adapt general post-trauma methods to specific situations and contexts. It allowed us to act as conduits for a great deal of information and encouraged us to listen to diverse voices and watch for hidden or missing agenda. Importantly, it gave us a firm vehicle for an uncertain journey and made us pay

attention to feedback and quality issues as an integral part of our practice so that it could be refined as we made our path.

Conditions were far from ideal and people and agencies were free to choose whether they accepted, adapted or discarded our recommendations. Many who were willing participants with us found us valuable companions and life-lines through their time of greatest need. A great deal of enquiry was stimulated at local to national level by our presence and work. We achieved our aims of pouring information, support, questions and ideas into frozen and distressed systems to get them moving again. I believe we were a small but important cog that got people and systems moving towards recovery in the early aftermath of the bomb. We continued to have an influence in keeping the momentum of the recovery work going in several places and this has helped the long-term recovery process to be continued in a journey that is on-going in Omagh and affected areas beyond.

## E 3

**A 'MESSY' ACTION RESEARCH STORY:**  
**"WHEN A WOMAN SPOKE FOR HERSELF..."**

*"One group of oral historians asserts: When women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden realities... new perspectives emerge that challenge the truth of official accounts and... existing theories"*

– Hewitt 1995: 329

This is an account of work that arose during my first contract in the aftermath of the Omagh bomb. I present this story as the type of action research strategy that is possible in the vulnerable atmosphere of disaster response and adjustment. It shows the messiness of real-life action research with its complex web of interacting first, second and third person enquiry using the different forms of knowledge available to me. In my explorations, I delved into the past to inform my research in the present in order to help people research and create their own visions for the future.

It is also a story of the courage and persistence of a small number of community leaders and local professionals, facilitated by myself and three associates (working at different times), to ensure that children distressed by this and other traumatic incidents received informed, skilled help from significant adults in their lives, such as teachers and clergy. To do this, some of their teachers recognised they first had to cope with their own distress and the distress of the staff team and whole school community. Bringing this about required a hard struggle with denial, inefficiency, ignorance, sabotage, power struggles and resistance at personal, social and institutional levels. It involved the issue of how to reach silent and silenced groups such as women, children and isolated communities, as well as those who silenced themselves for fear of being seen as weak. We aimed to pay attention to family and community contexts and reach out across bridges of communication and support rather than just focussing on individual pathology and treatment. The hope of the story is that working with the resistance we encountered in systems, rather than being defeated by it, created opportunities for learning and change in the way schools in general in the region could be supported after future disasters.

The story is an adaptation of a paper I presented at the Conference of the International Society of Health and Human Rights, Dubrovnik, Croatia, July 2001 as part of my commitment to third-person action. Real names have been changed and only selected details have been included because of the sensitivity of the material. Deciding how to retain the messy reality of the story without confusing the reader has been a challenge and I have placed sign-posts as guides along the way.

### **How the story began to unfold: The first meeting.**

The story began when a distraught woman, who I shall call 'Dara', came to see me and my colleague, Sue during one of our open 'surgeries' for teachers during our first visit to Omagh. She had contacted a staff welfare officer who knew me from my work in Derry schools and he directed her to our sessions. 'Dara' had just become Acting Principal of a Primary School of just 70 children, in another Education Board's area. The school served a scattered rural community in a remote border area some distance from Omagh. 'Dara' was angry because an administrative oversight had meant she had not received the information packs sent to schools about our work and meetings:

*"Dara spent over an hour with us. Her story was a distressed scramble of facts, emotions and opinions. She rushed at high speed into a detailed story about funding for a project that seemed irrelevant until we discovered the project was the brainchild of a volunteer helper at the school, and mother of three pupils, who had been killed in the bombing."*

- Taken from field notes, 1998

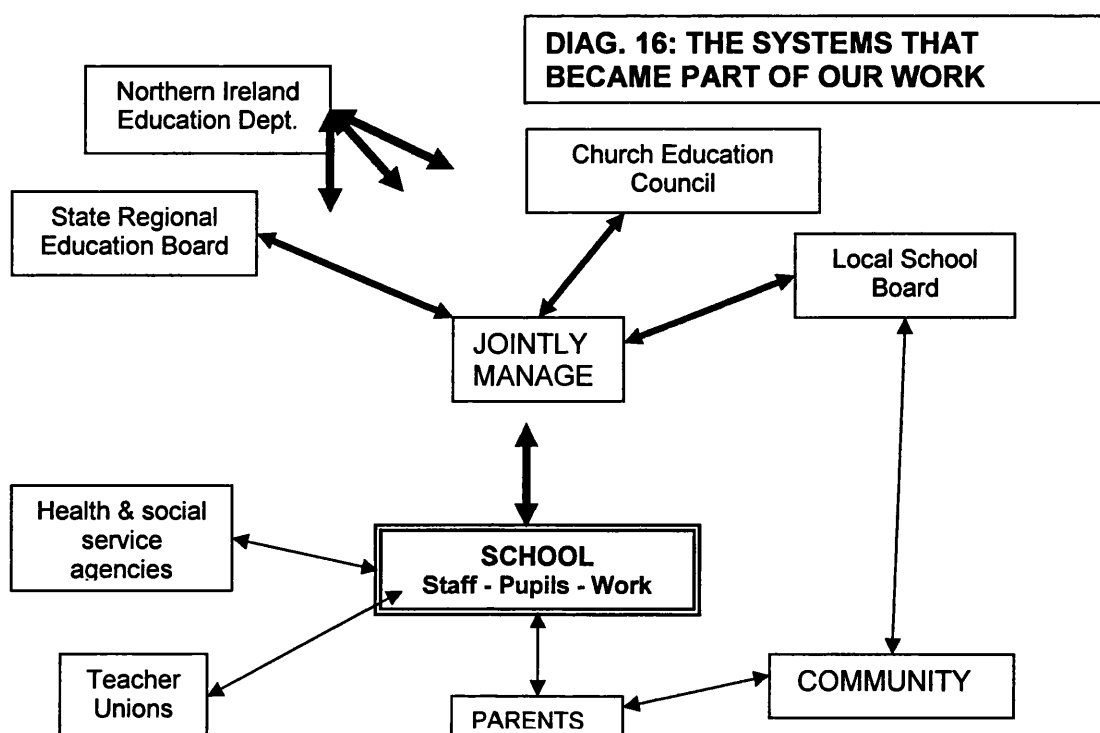
A stream of distress flowed from 'Dara' about the visits that had been made to the school as a result of the bomb by various school managers at the start of term. The school was so remote, they rarely had visitors and she had felt oppressed by the heavy-handed manner of these male managers 'hunting in packs of four' with little empathy for the impact of the bomb on her and the school. Being in an emotional state, she expressed her anger to them. They had little knowledge of disaster impact or how to respond except by labelling 'Dara' as 'the problem'. The managers returned 'Dara's' anger back to her, mirroring my own experience with managers at Hungerford (Capewell, 1993a) and also Sue's experiences with managers elsewhere. We both had to employ action inquiry methods to distance our personal experiences from those of 'Dara' without losing the empathy and understanding I had for her. Our recognition of her story and her position calmed her down. She felt heard and affirmed and wanted to

continue contact with us. Because of our heavy work-load in Omagh we promised to do so by phone and hoped we could meet her again if the contract was extended.

In the mean-time, Sue and I had to do our own co-enquiry work to defuse our own re-stimulated reactions concerning the attitudes of her managers. We then worked in partnership with my 'internal ally', the welfare officer, to explore options to deal with the fact that the organisational systems the school belonged to were a major part of the problem and her distress, and therefore had to be part of the solution. We kept in touch with 'Dara' by phone and brief meetings in Omagh and at her home, gaining more information on the way. We alerted key local professionals about issues being faced by the school, without breaking personal confidentiality. As we learnt more about the school's needs, the degree of the impact on the school emerged and our determination to get help to the school was fuelled.

### **Assessing the organisational context and advocating their support**

Sue, the Welfare Officer and I explored the issues, concluding that the denial of needs was a constant theme. In a later cycle of reflection, Cohen's analysis helped me understand that denial had occurred at several levels: denial of impact, interpretation and implication. It was more potent when it occurred as a collective act by public institutions (Cohen, 2001). No one had had the capacity to hear the school's distress about the bomb and other issues. Our first task was thus to understand the system (Diag. 16) in which the school was embedded and which was denying its needs.



Once we had a grasp of the school's complex organisational system, we then had to make a case for gaining permission and funds to work with the school to assess its needs properly. The school's management system was top-heavy for such a small school, being overseen by three Boards representing the Catholic Church, the State and the local community. We discovered that three Boards had never met together before to clarify areas of responsibility for the school. Boundaries were confused and no one was sure about who would fund our work – one Board covered staff training, another staff welfare and the third made local management decisions. Any work we might do would bridge all three.

We began to make contacts through our internal agents and allies and, thus our work moved from a personal dialogue to engagement with wider systems and broadened to reach out to the community system that the school served. Local community based officials were particularly quick to learn and realised how they had contributed to the school's problems. They were influential in persuading other parts of the system to fund our work, though this was still not achieved until four months after the bomb. We finally managed to gain a one-day session with the staff and insisted on having another day-long meeting with officers from the school's three managing bodies. Most importantly, the school's own Education Board was now funding the work and taking its proper responsibility for the school rather than the adjacent Board who had at first taken control of the whole disaster response effort.

### **The first sessions – creating a network of support, assessing the impact and needs.**

One of our most important actions was to bring people from the three managing bodies together for the first time ever, thus crossing religious and political divisions. We designed the meeting so that they got to know each other first as *'human beings affected by the bomb'*, not as *'roles with positions to defend'*. By sharing their own stories of the impact on themselves, they became united in a common human bond that transcended other differences at least long enough for them to agree on a way forward. Only then did we have any hope of mediating the many conflicts we knew existed within and between these agencies that would impinge on our work in the school. It was also a gentle means of helping them acknowledge and defuse the personal impact of the bomb on themselves.

We began in a similar way with the staff team, allowing staff to say as much or as little as they wished. It quickly became apparent that the impact was deeper than anyone



had so far appreciated. The hierarchy of suffering was operating and 'near misses' and a teacher whose child had been injured had kept their experiences hidden. Therefore, as well as using the session for giving basic information and problem-solving, we asked for their participation in a collaborative assessment of the full impact and needs. From our dialogues, we listed all the traumatic events experienced by the school community and sought detailed information about the Townland community that the school served to determine the full significance of events. Our findings became our main tool of advocacy for a longer programme of support. This is what emerged:

### **The impact of the Omagh bomb at first sight**

In the explosion, three young pupils under seven had lost their mother, baby sister, grandmother and twin sisters (due to be born two months later). The mother had also been a volunteer helper at the school, an important member of the school's 'women's group', and a leading campaigner for a school nursery. The staff had thus lost a colleague, a personal and family friend, while the community had lost a powerful voice. The ripples of loss (circles of vulnerability) spread through the school as many pupils were first cousins, distant relatives or friends of the victims and bereaved. Identification stress was present for the teacher on Maternity leave who was a friend of the dead mother. Their babies had been due at the same time.

Apart from these obvious bomb-related losses, a further catalogue of loss and trauma impinging on the school community emerged which contributed to the stress:

### **Past traumatic events**

- 'Troubles' related events: fatal booby-trap bombs and shootings involving staff and school Governors. In one incident, a staff member had lost 3 family members and an unborn child and this meant she particularly identified with the latest losses.
- In the previous year, several local traumatic deaths had occurred, including two youth suicides and accidental deaths of children.

### **Current traumatic incidents not related to the bomb**

- Stressful events leading up to the death 5 weeks after the bomb of one of two pupils in the same class who had leukaemia. The dead pupil's father was also a school Governor who was involved in decision making about the response to the bomb. This death created more direct distress in the school as a whole than the distress of the bomb.

- The stress of teaching itself, staff changes and managing family life. Several staff members had very large families, whose members were also affected by these incidents.
- The on-going tensions of civil unrest and an uneasy Peace, which give an added dimension not found in other disasters. This type of trauma is collective, more public and means that politics invades all parts of life and has the potential to divide communities.

### **Post-bomb traumatic incidents which emerged**

- Over the next two years, progress in our programme was complicated by two deaths of young people in road accidents. In each case, the victim was related to, or a family friend of, members of staff.
- The staff also had immense fears about their first major school inspection which could happen at any time in the year after the bomb. This would involve a great increase in work at a time when everyone was exhausted and vulnerable. It was a symbol of an uncaring educational system to the staff.

I knew that the previous and current stresses would have an influence on perceptions and coping capacities in those in the school and community affected by them and those available for support who made up the recovery environment. Current and perceived future stresses might also drain the staff team's available energy for dealing with the bomb. I therefore as a matter of urgency wrote a report of these assessments and put forward a proposal through the relevant agency for a programme of follow-up work to support the school until the second anniversary of the bomb.

### **The next stage of advocacy and persuasion for a follow-up programme**

It might be imagined that even the first list of losses above would warrant a speedy, adequately funded response, especially as the Secretary of State for Education, Dr Mo Mowlam, had promised that money should be no barrier to such work. This was not the case and this brief account can never communicate adequately the full nature of what was involved for ourselves and the local 'agents of recovery' who lived this process of advocacy to get help for this school. The longer it took, the more the stresses and repercussions accumulated. Eventually, after another five months permission for the follow-up programme was obtained. I received no remuneration for all the hours of support, information giving and advocacy involved in this process, I was driven by my concern for people and social justice, but I also suspect it gave purpose to my process of learning and recovery from the Hungerford experience.

I shall attempt to give a glimpse of this long journey with its tasks of advocacy and mediation; persuasion and education to counter denial, resistance and misuse of power. We were not doing this alone as we had recruited key active allies and co-researchers. I gained many insights from e-mails sent to me by some of these allies, though I had to take care not to get embroiled in the gossip and local inter-personal conflicts that were sometimes told to me in minute detail, too tedious to reproduce here. I found, and still find, the delays we encountered unbelievable, yet they were not uncommon as the Principal of another school badly affected by the bomb in another Education authority went through a similar stressful process. I shall never know the full story behind the delays, but I think it vital that these issues are explored in spite of the difficulties of doing so because of the risk of identification of individuals. Some possibilities for the delays emerged from the e-mails:

*"I can see 'politics' becoming involved here. I can't say for sure, but I am strongly of the opinion that the Education and Library Board A don't want to be embarrassed by the Education and Library Board B doing things when they are not....."*

- e-mail from a local ally, Nov 1998

This referred to the fact that the original Board overseeing the bomb response had felt they should be doing the work and had not appreciated the importance of the Managers who were creating the problems needed to be part of the solution. There may also have been guilt about the fact that the Board had failed to get information to the school.

**Denial** of course is another likely reason for the delays. I have explored resistance and denial in previous disasters and in relation to the Northern Ireland situation. Smyth has commented on the use of denial as a coping strategy during 'the Troubles' (Smyth, 1998). The Education system, as part of the social system, would also be caught up in this and helped turn private denial into its most damaging form of collective denial (Cohen, 2001). Dealing positively with this denial took up much of our time and personal energy, yet by engaging with it and offering rational challenges to it in our conversations, we were able to bring about some changes with some people from local to national levels.

Evidence from e-mails backed our tacit feelings that **power games** and **sabotage** were other factors in the delay. Some officials were translating personal issues into delaying

tactics, passively by failing to attend meetings or fulfil obligations and promises, and actively through destructive behaviour. In one case, an official (X) initially gave very active support for our work. However, we discovered he was aggressively usurping the power of a key lay manager (Y) who was new to the post. Once Y fully understood his role and what was happening, he took on his responsibility and power. The 'pretender', X, was deposed, whereupon he replaced his support for our work by denial that it was needed and, thereafter, actively engaged in behaviour equal to that of a revengeful, defeated child. He began by attacking the integrity of lay and statutory officials until finally we, as external consultants, were targeted with attacks on our professional integrity, skill and fees. My colleague at the time, Lilian, shared her insight into X's behaviour, discerning that he was, *"a man who would be totally supportive only as long as it served his own purpose, then he would destroy"*. Further proof came in a series of e-mails sent to me by another manager before the main programme was agreed:

*"Were person X other than the person I discern him to be, I might not need to prepare as thoroughly as I feel obliged to. It appears that X might have little conscience about abandoning the school and its needs when he might have to sacrifice his own convenience... I feel an urgency to focus the proposals both in terms of what is proposed and in terms of who has responsibility.... I fear that X's unconscious may thwart good intentions to de-rail proposals at a later juncture" - 30.11.98*

Person Y e-mailed again while still awaiting a decision about funding:

*"X knew about the meeting about the proposals but he didn't turn up ...afterwards, he denied all knowledge of it. His colleague says this is typical and he may be 'miffed' that I had taken his provision of a part-time extra teacher and turned it into a full-time extra teacher. X was complaining that other people were 'doing his work'. I think the Santa Claus outfit is rattling about in his wardrobe! He wants to get out and give out the lollipops. He'll rage when he feels that people are denting his image and 'going behind his back"*

- 18.02.99

The next month I received another e-mail showing how the attacks from X had been diverted to attacks on me. He had attempted to reduce my proposal significantly and had queried a minor element on my invoice, in spite of his previous assertions that I charged too little for what we did:

*"Our meeting with X was 'all over the place', and... he said there were 'political' problems on two levels. First, with regard to yourself: there would be some who would say that you are promoting yourself. I know this must be hurtful for you. However, I want you to know that I do not subscribe to that view. And even if you were, some people said: well, you do the business that we need. I was at pains to point out to X that, as far as I am concerned, your input into this process is non-negotiable."*

The e-mails gave me insights, usually difficult to obtain, into micro decision-making processes after disaster. They backed my intuitive knowing that the help this school was going to get rested largely on internal politics and personalities, not a systematic and informed assessment of need. Somewhere, sight had been lost of what was at stake - the support of young children with multiple loss and their carers, all distressed by a major atrocity. It also confirmed that external consultants serve a useful purpose after disaster because they are outside these organisational squabbles.

In spite of all the problems we all faced, there were enough **positive forces** present to counter the institutional denial. My team's presence was a major catalytic force in facilitating and linking up our courageous local community allies to overcome the resistance. Their support kept us going, along with our own commitment to this work in general and the school in particular. Eventually, funding was gained to continue the work until June 2000.

### **The Long-term Programme**

Once the long-term programme had been agreed, many of the earlier problems fell away. The programme was composed of termly problem-solving and training sessions for the staff team and a day working in the school to help staff put their learning into practice by acting as on-the-job mentors and by modelling creative work with children. Being a small school, the children got to know us, helped by our willingness to play football and learn Irish dancing with them in the playground. The staff and children became important 'community agents' in reaching out into the community through the school.

Other community members were receptive to our style of work because we entered the community as human beings first, and then as people with expertise to offer, but not impose. More allies were recruited in the process. The Chair of the School Board

quickly learned and took on his power to move us astutely through the bureaucratic minefield. He kept faith in our work when it was being undermined and when the process of recovery itself threw up the occasional, but potentially destructive, negative projections.

The work moved out to influence the local community through the Board of School Governors, composed mainly of parents and community leaders such as one of the Parish priests. We had group 'question and answer' sessions with them and invited them to become our 'agents'. Several consulted us on their past traumas (usually 'Troubles' related) that had been reactivated by the bombing. The local Catholic priest even integrated the BE FIT & Phys. multi-dimensional coping model into his Sunday sermon. As a result, parents were encouraged to attend an evening session with us at the school and several came back to see us on an individual basis. Some of the school staff also became 'agents of learning' in the community and so too did some of the school children. In spite of the fears of people who had not met us that we, as English 'experts', would never be accepted, we experienced great friendship and willingness to have our offers of help considered. This meant we could use spontaneous moments to chat to people and use the time productively, as this instance shows:

*"I was driving past the house of a woman who had been at the parents' meeting. She waved and I stopped to ask how she was coping herself and with her cousin's three young bereaved children, as well as her own. Her worries spilled out, especially about the content of the children's play at the weekend. They had played 'burials', making a large grave out of sand with flowers from the garden on top. She had wanted to stop the bereaved father from seeing it, but couldn't. The children had run up to him and took him to see their handiwork. He had taken it all in his stride but she was still worried that their play and behaviour might be harmful and abnormal.*

*I wanted to do more than just 'make her feel better', so I set up an enquiring dialogue to expose the thinking and theory behind my questions (this gave me time to think too). In this way we became partners in our collaborative enquiry into her question. We realised that the children were not distressed in their play and were light and happy afterwards, especially when they could show off their efforts to the father. I was able to affirm her natural skills as a parent, but also pass on tips that would help her assess when she needed to be worried and get expert help."*

This story also showed how work at one level (the individual) had been made possible because of work at other levels (individual, then group, organisational and community). What also helped was the friendliness of the children towards us when we worked in the school and they had been the gatekeepers who made us acceptable to adults.

I worked with the school between visits, undertaking problem-solving by phone and e-mail. This kept me in touch with the everyday dilemmas facing staff and meant they did not feel abandoned each time we left. At times, staff became overwhelmed with their own reactions, the marginalisation of teachers by other professionals, and especially by the children's reactions and behaviour. As one wrote:

*"My problem is that [bereaved child]'s work and behaviour has changed. The child minder will need help with this too. I suspect that all is not well in the home situation. Her work is slipping and her mind is distracted. She's being rebellious in unusual way as if she is saying, "Punish me! I want to feel bad!" There's a whole class discipline problem as a spin off from all this.' I feel guilty about keeping firm discipline because of what she has been through. The other girl's problems come out as aches and pains and feeling sick, but she is less clinging than at first." - e-mail, 1999*

Teachers were confused about how to balance individual and whole class needs, and how to assess whether behaviour changes were due to the bomb, the other pupil death or something entirely different. Increasing anxiety was causing the staff to be over-attentive to every detail of the children's behaviour. This kind of information helped me prepare relevant material for the next session to back my brief e-mail replies.

Because my other networks, I could also initiate some mediation with other agencies in Omagh, though not always with success. For example, some conflicts arose because of the hierarchical, non-consultative styles in which other support agencies approached the school and bereaved children. These agencies only appeared once we had alerted them to needs in the school, yet seemed to be jealous of our presence and declined our offer for a joint meeting about creating a consistent network of care between all the carers of the bereaved children, a key feature of work with children advocated by Gordon & Wraith (1993). For example, a professional tried to impose art therapy on two (but not the third) of the bereaved children without seeing them or their father first to assess their individual and family needs. The school did not have space for therapeutic

work. The staff also felt the children did not need to be made to feel even more different from the rest. The school and family found the agency approaches oppressive and disempowering. They felt blamed when they rejected their offers of help.

Jealousy of my team by other services became a common problem and sometimes this was not helped by the school's teachers being enthusiastic about our work. As one e-mail from a teacher informed us:

*"[An Advisor] has asked me to find out all I can about Sand Therapy. The answer I got from the Trauma Centre was, 'We don't know!' They say that this is all a learning experience for them. When I invited a therapist and social worker from the Trauma Centre, I told her, 'One thing has got to me: how little the trauma centre knows about trauma! There appears to be no one more capable than Elizabeth Capewell is.'"*

In this case, I ensured that I made personal contact with the people involved to pre-empt any problems. This raised dilemmas about quality issues. I felt a double-bind between being seen to be effective and causing jealousy, and not being seen to be effective and being rubbished. It contrasted with the comments of a senior officer in Omagh when the local newspaper quoted several school Principals who named us and said how helpful our work had been. The officer remarked that, in his opinion, the best indication of excellence was that no one would know who was responsible, implying that, by being named, we had not met his criteria of excellence.

We ended our school programme with another collaborative exercise. Using the idea of the Trauma Process Map, the staff team drew out their own journey on large sheets of paper, noting key events, what helped and what hindered their progress, how they had changed and how they knew they had changed. From this they worked out plans for the future. Some made good use of the work and a few remained a little sceptical, though these tended to be staff who had not committed themselves fully at the start. One sceptic did, however, acknowledge that her belief in private grief had not been helpful to the whole staff team. There were too many conflicts in the school when we arrived for us to be able to solve them all and some continued long after we left, but the staff survived, kept the school going and came out well in the Ofsted inspection. Once our job of stabilising the school enough for their usual managers and advisors to continue the work, our thoughts could turn to helping the managing Boards to integrate learning into policies and practice at higher organisational levels.



### **Continuing support to our local 'allies'**

As well as supporting the staff directly between visits, we continued to support our allies who had shown the power of their leadership and had supported our work and the recovery of the school community. We helped them resolve the day-to-day inter-personal conflicts that are part and parcel of community and school life but which gain extra meaning with the stresses of a disaster. One person was asked to resolve a conflict within the school and was becoming entangled in the dynamics. The medium of e-mail freed people to be more honest than on the phone, perhaps because they were writing them in the safety of their own homes. Amongst several issues e-mailed to me was this one:

*"Issue 3: A 6 year old boy. [The boy] claimed that the staff at the after-school club wouldn't let him go to the toilet. The father came to the school in confrontational form. [The boy] is always watching the bereaved child. He talks gruesomely about the Omagh bomb: "Would they be roaring, shouting and screaming in the bomb?" He knows he is annoying the bereaved child, yet it doesn't stop him doing it. He knows he attracts Teacher B's attention. He recently asked, "Does the body rot after it goes into the ground?" He searched her face looking for a reaction. Teacher B said, "All these things are rearing their head now, at this distance from the event. My problem is worrying about what's coming next?"*

I dealt with the e-mails by offering overviews and an observer's perspective to the sender, who was astute enough to take note and not get entangled in destructive dynamics. The e-mails gave me evidence of the mechanics of community fragmentation and the repercussions of disaster at an everyday human level.

Other issues concerned the lack of inter-agency co-operation, for example when one of the bereaved children went into hospital. The nursing sister commented to the child, *"Your mammy must be a very busy lady, that she can't come to see you!"* indicating that one service had not communicated to another. The hospital had told 'Dara' she could have been there with the girl as a family friend but an Education official had told her *"it wasn't the role of the teacher to do what the health worker and social worker do"*.

### **Action Review and Learning by the Education Boards**

Two middle managers from different Boards overcame different forms of resistance to become advocates for our work. They also succeeded in gaining agreement for final action review and learning sessions two years after the bomb with the managers from the three school Boards. During these reviews we used a collaborative exploration to create their own post-bomb process map of their two-year journey. A similar exercise had been done with the school team and mapping had been a powerful tool of reflection. In the session with the school Boards, mapping encouraged a high level of frankness about inter-personal conflicts. We were available to offer insights to place theirs in a wider frame of understanding and this in turn fostered resolution. A joint assessment of the current situation was made before reaching a consensus about how to move to the next stage of integrating learning into policy. We used our usual models, such as BE FIT & Phys, to reinforce our original teaching of them and to show how styles of support, coping and management needed to change with the different stages of the post-disaster journey.

Our work was reported in the Belfast Telegraph, but it was difficult to gain feedback about how far the learning was integrated by the Boards. It soon became clear that they had moved on to other more pressing and current issues, while our main allies, the local priest and the staff welfare officer moved to other jobs within a few months of our departure, though they remained in contact and reported that they continued to use their learning in their new posts. We did have some feedback from individual officers who felt they had learned a great deal. One told us our work had helped when her mother died and that as a result of her personal experience of grief she was now able to appreciate the difficulties and behaviour of the school staff team after the bomb.

### **In Conclusion**

'Dara', the woman who could not hide her rage, brought meaning to the lines I remember from a long forgotten source: *"When a woman tells her truth, the world splits asunder"*. Her 'truth' had challenged community, church and statutory systems. The status quo cracked but out of the cracks pathways of opportunity for engagement with others could be opened up so that inroads of learning and change could be made. She showed how one person in an isolated school could tell her story and set a process in motion that made a difference. Though the journey for the family remains difficult, their progress is remarkable. 'Dara' is still a source of support to them and she is proud of what she achieved in her community by speaking out.

## **PART F**

### **POST-SCRIPT AND NEXT STEPS**

- 1. A reflection: the path I have constructed and where it will go next.**
- 2. Stop press: disaster work never ends - the latest story as it unfolds...**

The final reflection of this thesis on the path I have created since my first disaster is but a brief pause. Like many other occasions in the past, my next steps have started before I have completely finished my present task. After giving priority so long to reflection and writing, I noticed my energy for action gathering again as ideas for my post-thesis life began to form in my mind. They would have remained ideas to be worked on later, but for a quite unexpected turn of events told in the story with which I conclude this phase of my professional journey. Even if I feel I want to get off the path of disaster, it feels that the choice is not entirely mine and there is work yet to be done. My opening quotation seems relevant once again:

***"It is not for you to finish the task, but you are not free to desist from it"***

**- Ethics of the Fathers, 2.21**

## F I

### **THE PATH FROM DISASTER NEVER ENDS...**

The eminent disaster sociologist Thomas Drabek, reflecting on the choices he had made in the development of his long disaster research career, wrote:

*"I have chosen to pursue my dreams. That is, first, I have become excited about a question and have then borrowed or invented the methods to pursue it. In my early years, unique events – certain disasters – stimulated the initial research question. Two decades later, I posed the question and waited for appropriate events"*

- Drabek, 1997: 22

I found this statement affirming of my own process. The journey since my first experience at Hungerford has been a long and passionate exploration. The passion grew from a conviction that, though the Hungerford disaster had been managed well in many respects considering the field of work was not well developed, many aspects could be managed better. If people could be offered the right information and support early enough, their stress could be reduced before it became entrenched and their problems could be solved before they became intractable. With better management, repercussions in the community and the stress of rescue and recovery workers could be prevented or managed more healthily. If managers had more understanding, then the role of schools and the needs of young people and their teachers and carers could be found a place in the recovery.

My Hungerford experience was quickly followed by other experiences at Lockerbie and on Merseyside in the wake of the Hillsborough tragedy. I began to notice patterns and themes that they had in common and the differences caused by the specific details of the disaster itself, the communities they affected and the relationship between the two. From these observations, questions began to crystallise which I carried with me to later disasters and other traumatic events, including my personal tragedy, the death of my daughter, Ann, and the research and campaigning that followed.

The questions intertwined with my own sense-making process out of which my Trauma Process Map emerged to guide myself and others. Other frameworks were developed

and tested that not so much gave answers to my first questions, but provided more questions and processes that promoted an enquiring mind in myself and, in turn, the people I worked with. The maps and models I created, described in Part C and D, came from layer upon layer of reflections from my experience combined with ideas from many sources that resonated with them, and sometimes challenged them. They are original in the way I have brought these influences together into presentational forms that can be adapted to many situations and be used by people, even if they have no specialist role or expertise in disaster work. The use of the multi-dimensional coping model ('BE FIT & Phys) for building rapport, coping capacities and planning methods of response and Kfir's simple crisis intervention model, provided mechanisms for encouraging an enquiring, participative approach from professional and lay helpers for any kind and length of interaction. The idea of empowering individual community members and groups, public and commercial organisations as 'agents of recovery' enables positive ripples to spread through all parts of the disaster community to act as a counter force to the ripples of disaster. The Trauma Process Map proved to be a useful guide too for planning timely responses that enable people to have more choices about recovery, with the 'clash of the gods' concept illustrating how styles of managing the response need to change as the pace and tasks of crisis management evolve.

Reflecting on my contribution to the field of disaster response, I would claim that these maps and models provide the concrete, practical evidence of the specific combination of concepts, processes and methods I have brought to the field. Though many aspects of my work have been inspired by others, I have developed them for my own specific purposes and produced original adaptations of them. The Trauma Process map and applications are original constructions created from many reflections on my own experience. So too are the diagrammatic formulations of the 'Bridging the Gap' and the 'Fishing Nets and Stepping Stones' concepts for explaining the need for community outreach and the application of Handy's 'gods of management' ideas to the different phases of disaster management. Another original construction, the S-S CIRA model, provides a comprehensive model that ensures my own specific style of context sensitive disaster assessment and management that is the hall-mark of a participative approach to disaster response rather than the application of prescriptive, pre-determined procedures. The uniqueness of these models lies in the fact that they are not just descriptive and theoretical. They are designed for practical use and to be flexible enough for many types of use by different people in different situations. They are founded on practical theories created and refined in the field before being placed in a wider framework of cognitive knowledge.

My models thus offer a process, rather than a prescription, that can be adapted for different contexts because they have been devised from practice from a variety of perspectives in multiple contexts. This suggests other aspects of my contribution to the field – frameworks that allow flexibility and holistic approaches in situations that are highly contextual with many variables. I have a breadth of skills, experience and understanding drawn from many professions and a grasp of the theories and models that these have produced for working with disaster. When I approach a new disaster contract, I am not bound by any one model so I can enter with a broad range of tools and an open, enquiring mind that puts the people and context first and the methods and models at their service. My colleague in Omagh, Sue Pittman, saw this as the hallmark of my practice. Coming out of the bounded, clinical setting of a Psychiatric Hospital, she told me how she had to unlearn her existing approaches and learn anew about how to meet disaster in the raw in community settings unbounded by walls and prescribed protocols.

My holistic, ecological approach allows me to deal with many aspects of disaster response as a whole, rather than separating them. This is unusual in a field where many people specialise and sometimes forget that the impact of disaster is a multi-dimensional affair. In particular I can work with children and adolescents in home, community and school contexts which many disaster workers cannot or will not do, while my skills range from working with and managing community and organisational systems, through group work to short and long-term therapeutic work with individuals. My very specific contribution has been my pioneering efforts in the UK to define the role of the school and other young person's agencies in disaster and trauma response and then take action to encourage the implementation of pre-disaster education and comprehensive, phased post-incident management.

My involvement with the CARPP programme and the research for this thesis has added another contribution not yet made as coherently as in these pages. This concerns the application of action research philosophy and practice to the intense, volatile context of disaster work. This has contributed to the way I use my models and the use of these as tools of action research to generate practical knowing. My learning about the philosophical basis of action research, and in particular a participative world view, has enabled me to claim a place for participative, emergent styles of work in a field that is heavily dominated by research and practice that privileges traditional positivist scientific research practices that many like myself find difficult to apply to intensely human situations.

While my particular style of disaster work can be attributed in general to the inclusive, creative and organic nature of action research approaches, three specific aspects of my work have arisen because of it. The first is my development of a specific form of post-trauma response (the S-S CIRA model) and my own methods of group stress debriefing. In my accounts of these methods, I have exposed the underlying world-view and beliefs that underlie my thinking. Such exposure is rarely found in the literature on immediate post-trauma interventions and I have argued that it is this omission that has led to the destructive and polarised controversy surrounding the post-trauma debriefing debate. I believe that the major philosophical differences between people on opposing sides of the debate account for the fact that the conflict continues so ferociously.

Secondly, my attention to the micro-processes of practice and process demanded by action research has generated knowledge about such processes in disaster response that are rarely reported except as raw, unprocessed stories from the field. Most literature on disaster management response concentrates on prescriptive strategies, methods and techniques of response rather than on the various personal and professional processes that are involved in entry and engagement, maintaining a presence and leaving a disaster situation which I have addressed in Part D. I have also included the psychological issues involved in the dynamics of the insider-outsider and the scape-goating complex that is commonly found in the repercussions of disaster. The inclusion of a wide range of issues bridges the gap between emergency managers who have been guilty of ignoring psychological issues in themselves and in their work as much as some psychologists have been guilty of forgetting the wider social context and practical concerns of survivors.

Thirdly, action research has given me the backing and rigour to claim a place for a style of disaster work that allows me to operate in a world where women's ways of knowing and being can easily be dismissed and devalued. I have been able to create a practice where I can operate in a very natural, low-key and non-elitist manner without having to rely on an over-inflated ego or the status and structures of an academic or professional institution or a commercial organisation. The greatest contribution I feel I have made has been the empowerment of lay people (including young people) and general community professionals to respond to their own disasters in an informed, rigorous and participative manner using action research to value their existing knowledge and co-generate new ideas.

In relation to the developing field of action research, this thesis makes a contribution through its demonstration of how a range of first, second and third person possibilities for attention and action can be held in real-time moments of practice. It illustrates how decisions can be made and actions can be co-created with disciplined, purposeful reflection even in very volatile situations demanding a context sensitive approach. I have shown how my early professional practice, which used action research implicitly, has been enriched and given more rigour so that action research has become an explicit and essential part of my professional practice and everyday life. It is not just an extra tool of practice but a way of being that infuses my attitudes and the ground from which I experience and act in the world. This is particularly important in a field where attitude and relationship are the roots, trunk and branches from which methods can grow. In this way, I have claimed a place for action research that does not exclude people by its jargon, grand strategies and labels. More specific contributions include my taxonomy of first-person enquiry methods according to their place in moving a person along the arcs from inner awareness to changes in outward behaviour. Section B3 is my contribution to articulating the real-life dilemmas in my quest to demonstrate quality and integrity as I integrate action research in situations where purpose and intent are driven by different values from my own.

I now turn from a reflection on the contribution of this thesis to my professional field and action research to a reflection on how I turned it into a written form. The process of presenting this journey has been long and tortuous. My decision to present a glimpse of the whole process, rather than one specific aspect in depth, has caused many problems, not least in the cutting of many detailed accounts of actions and reflections. I have, however, persisted and remained true to myself and my purpose. I joined CARPP to do something that contributed to my work and my field. More than anything else I needed to make sense of the essence of the whole. It was this that I had to carry in my mind and body every time I entered a disaster response or any other post-trauma work. Whenever I was invited to train people or do a lecture, it was a sense of the whole that people demanded – in an hour or a few days, seldom longer. The field of work was new and funding was, and still is, short for pre- and post-disaster human recovery work and people in my position. I was not ready to narrow my focus to one aspect until I had a fuller understanding of the whole and could place my experiences and insights in the context of the theories and practices of other disaster and trauma researchers and practitioners.



Like Drabek, my journey in disaster work has lasted nearly twenty years. I return once more to T.S. Eliot to sum up the whole process and the processes within:

*"In order to arrive there.  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by a way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not"*  
- From 'East Coker' in 'The Four Quartets'.

-

and, like T.S. Eliot, draw from the hope in the words of Julian of Norwich, that in the end:

*"All shall be well, all shall be well  
And all manner of thing shall be well"*  
- From 'Revelations of Divine Love', 1373

Now that I have come to the end of this part of my journey, I look back, as I do with my disaster responses, with mixed feelings of satisfaction and disappointment with the forms I have used to present such complex, living processes here in these pages. My desire to interweave the pages with the images from art and nature that have inspired my journey will have to wait for another occasion. I console myself as I do after a disaster response – that I have done what I can with what I have and the imperfections will keep me moving and enquiring to do them better elsewhere. As a practitioner with an action researcher's mind, I can delight in the many spin-offs my efforts have produced. Even the discarded accounts have already found a purpose in inspiring and facilitating others. My Community Epidemiology study, presented as my Diploma paper (Capewell, 1998c) is one example, and the in-depth study of the controversy surrounding post-trauma debriefing methods (Capewell, 2004) is another. The latter prolonged my writing process but deepened my understanding of the discomfort of living in the clash of different research and practice paradigms and gave me more confidence to argue my case for my own approaches. It also helped others, in Croatia,

Australia and this country, to make their case too against a powerful positivist lobby attacking their practice-based knowledge.

Much of my practice feels as if it has been developed from many moments of opportunistic action in which I could exercise my training and experience. I want to refine this view in the light of Torbert's definitions of action inquiry (Fisher, Rooke, Torbert, 2000) and see it as opportunism coated with many other layers of intuition, forward thinking and the coming together at critical moments of all that I know in my heart, mind, body and soul. It is the culmination of years of experience, observation, enquiry, thinking and, at times, total immersion in this subject as well as an integration of what I brought from my pre-disaster career and the values guiding my life. I sense I not only grab the moment but also make sure that further moments are created in order for the consequences of the original moment to be followed up and, guided by my values and beliefs, transformed into useful social action.

As I have progressed through my writing, my passion to return fully to practice has been revived and what I do next will be the true measure of the value of this thesis. My passion for improving pre- and post-disaster work has now been joined by my passion for practitioner-based action research. The more confident I have become in action research, the more I have discovered others who consciously or subconsciously share the same philosophy. They include my colleagues in the ESRC project run by the Centre for Studies in Criminal and Social Justice at Edge Hill College, Joanne Tortorici Luna in Los Angeles and Sally Mackay and colleagues in the State Community Department and Emergency Management College, Victoria, Australia who already have links with Yoland Wadsworth's (2001) action research centre in Melbourne. My friends at the Community Stress Prevention Centre in northern Israel have long been action researchers, though they may not name it as such, and the writing of a recent contact in Canada, Ken Hewitt, shows he has the values and purpose of action research:

*"My background is in the physical environment and geo-hazards. Yet I have come to believe that social understanding and socially just and appropriate action are the more crucial issues for the contemporary disaster scene."*

- Hewitt, 1995:.318

My next step is to take action research and community orientated disaster response into both local and global arenas. On the local level, I intend to set up courses to

increase the capacity of lay community members to be enquiring effective local 'agents of recovery'. On the global level, I intend to create a network of action researchers in disaster response to promote collaborative enquiry and a participative approach as a basis for community-based disaster preparation, using whole systems methods, and recovery, using 'in the moment action-reflection' and other methods described in this thesis.

The process and products of this thesis make these intentions possible. The process and products are my evidence that I have gone some way to recycling the pain and been worthy of the suffering of myself and those who I have walked alongside.

Watching the documentary '*The Hungerford Massacre*' last night (7th December, 2004), was a timely signpost that proved to me how writing this thesis has finally placed my first experience of disaster firmly in the past.

## F 2

### **STOP PRESS:** **THE LATEST STORY – DISASTER WORK NEVER ENDS...**

T.S. Eliot again provides words for the place I find myself in now:

*"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time"*  
- 'East Coker' from the 'Four Quartets'

The ending in F1 turned out not to be my real ending. I now end as I began with a new cycle of action-reflection, a story that I did not expect to tell...

*"At 18.13 on a dank autumn evening, 6th November, 2004, the Paddington to Plymouth train, travelling at 100mph and carrying three hundred passengers, ran over a car driven in an act of suicide onto a level crossing, just before reaching Newbury. The catastrophic derailment killed seven, including two children. One hundred and fifty passengers were injured and the rest, along with witnesses, lay rescuers, emergency service personnel and relatives waiting at the station, were exposed to intense traumatic images and fear. One of the dead, a woman, was Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council, thus a bereaved man and organisation were responsible for the disaster response."*

As I was frantically trying to meet deadlines for submitting this thesis, I did not respond as usual, apart from offering some information and brief consultancy. However, I observed the slowness of the official response and its minimal nature – books of condolence, leaflets, and a nine-to-five help-line run by volunteers for two weeks. There appeared to be no pro-active support from the Education or Youth services for schools with injured and bereaved staff and pupils. Not to act in my own community felt like a betrayal of what I had been researching for seventeen years and this thesis. I asked myself, *"What can I do?"* given my thesis stress. I was particularly concerned for the uninjured but deeply shocked passengers sent home on coaches immediately. The

small rural community of rescuers and witnesses also appeared to have received no informed support other than what neighbours and clergy could give. No one appeared to be showing leadership in the community to encourage these groups to take preventative action for their shock.

I persuaded the main town church to sponsor two public meetings for me to give a talk about the impact of disaster and coping ideas, as a volunteer member of the community. The first meeting was daunting, not knowing who, if any, would attend. It went well and some bridges between need and help have been built and crossed. I have created some community 'agents of recovery', including a local journalist, youth leader and teachers. A local solicitor who acted for many survivors of the Paddington train crash contacted me. He turned out to be the solicitor I had contacted in relation to Story 2, 'Giving myself Justice', showing that even negative events can have positive consequences. He came to my meeting and we have agreed to meet weekly as the start of a Disaster Practitioners Enquiry Group. After my second public meeting, I was invited to be present at an open legal surgery about compensation issues. Every survivor who attended chose to talk with me and more contacts were made and coping ideas passed on. Most had received help for physical wounds, but little or nothing from GPs or hospitals for the wounds of traumatic shock. I am working with the youth leader to seek ways of reaching the many young people on the train.

I feel liberated working in this free atmosphere, not having to manage the defences and power games of Local Authorities. My new solicitor colleague has an impressive grasp of trauma reactions and his colleagues are eager to learn. He shares my passion for giving help before problems are entrenched and, at last, I have an ally in my own community who, like me, will emerge to exercise leadership when needed. Serendipity is working as one chance contact leads to another. En route to the Memorial Service in Reading, I met a friend on the station who had just met his friend whose daughter had survived the crash. We were introduced and the conversations flowed as we travelled to the service together. Later, he phoned to say my 'just being' alongside helped him cope. Our actions are bearing significant fruit for the individuals concerned. More can happen once this thesis is submitted. I have used my values to choose between the competing demands of the final polishing of my thesis and the social action that came my way. If I use the question posed in B3 to judge my choices, "*Can I live with myself?*" I know that I can because human flourishing has occurred from emergent collaborative actions born of practical knowing as we create new paths. Finally, on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2004, this thesis stage of my path building has to finish here.

## **APPENDICES**

- I. Hungerford Reflections**
- II. A Menu of Post-Disaster Methods**

## APPENDIX I

### HUNGERFORD REFLECTIONS: LEARNING AND NEW QUESTIONS

The following themes emerged from the reflections on my work after the Hungerford massacre and its repercussions. At the time, many of these were tacitly held at the time and my work in the years following, and especially once I had joined CARPP, involved bringing them into full awareness, checking out their quality and gaining a deeper understanding of them and their causes.

- **The Gap:** There seemed to be a yawning gap between the people affected by the disaster and those who offered professional and lay support, indicating the difficulties attached to both giving and receiving help of any kind. Many affected people and disaster staff were very resistant to asking for help and felt ashamed to admit they were affected by the disaster
- **Children's needs:** These were forgotten, diminished, disbelieved or managed insensitively. Those who spoke on their behalf were equally marginalised by others.
- **Strength of secondary reactions:** People affected by disaster found that secondary reactions, for example to the reactions of other people and repercussions such as inquests, could be harder to handle and understand than primary stress reactions.
- **The creation of difference:** Disaster quickly polarised attitudes. Reactions and emotions were diverse and strongly held.
- **Victimisation of victims:** Some victims were victimised further
- **Rivalry:** Judgements, blaming and jealousies were quick to surface, within and between communities, within and between agencies.
- **Memorials and Funds:** Fund distribution and decision- making about memorials activated particularly strong emotions for at least ten years and brought out feelings that had previously been repressed.
- **Bizarre behaviour:** The disaster brought out unpredictable behaviour in some people, especially if already vulnerable. Even stable people could feel they were going crazy and as if their worlds had been turned upside down. This was seen in small ways more than in dramatic behaviour, for example in how people related or reacted to others at work, home or phone calls received by officials from the public. Examples of dramatic behaviour included a policeman who tried to rob a bank and

the young men who suddenly realised they were mortal and left their families 'to enjoy life while they could'.

- **Quickly forgotten by others:** People outside of the disaster community soon lost interest and had little appreciation of the facts, complexity and the depths of the real experience.
- **Convergence of attention:** A lot of help converged on the most identifiable victims – in the first instance the dead and bereaved, in the second a few of the injured. The wider disaster community tended to be ignored, as did the fact that a large sector of the community was under siege for many hours, not knowing what was happening outside.
- **The ripples of disaster:** these spread further and more deeply than could be measured or imagined.
- **Official v. grass-roots discourse:** The official public discourse about the disaster often differed from the grass-roots version of events and the experiences of front-line disaster rescue and care staff
- **Broken promises:** the promise of 'no expense spared' lasted about a week and assurances that current work could be suspended and 'red-tape' cut were forgotten within a month or so when the next statistical returns or dead-lines were due.
- **Varying measure of quality:** Judgements on the performance of disaster workers could be contradictory, according to the position of the person making them
- **The Middle Manager's dilemma:** Being a middle manager and mediator between the community and bureaucracy was a very uncomfortable position, akin to being a nut in a nutcracker.
- **Disaster: one or many?:** A disaster was not just one finite event in space and time, experienced by everyone in the same way. It contained many experiences, many voices and many stories in the community affected by the disaster. Some of these were given privilege over others, thus setting the scene for future problems
- **Pace of work:** A different style and pace from normal work was needed by professionals dealing with disaster as they needed to be responsive to changing information, needs and resources. They often had to step outside usual work roles and slow bureaucratic processes had to be by-passed. This was also true to some extent for Emergency Services who were not used to working with death and horror on such a large scale.
- **Disaster work changes lives:** the work had a massive impact on rescue and care staff. It changed lives and, in a few cases, precipitated death.



- **Disaster disrupts organisations:** Just as the disaster affected whole communities, not just individuals, disaster response work had a major impact on the wider staff team and organisation, not just on individual staff working directly in the response.
- **Organic v. mechanical approaches:** The concept of working with process was not well understood. Concrete solutions and fixed tasks were wanted immediately before thorough assessments of the situation and needs had been made.
- **Organisational hierarchy of importance:** This was marked amongst the agencies involved in the response. The emergency services and parts of the medical profession were at the top with social services and clergy leading the helping professions. Services working within the community such as Health Visitors, Youth Workers, Librarians and Teachers were not seen as having a specific response role even though they were in contact with far more people in the affected community.
- **Not a disaster just for Hungerford alone:** Services tended to be concentrated in the community where the main events occurred in Hungerford, even though many people involved came from elsewhere and did not feel they had access to services. They felt excluded because they did not live or work in the town.

From these observations, **three questions** formed and have been developed throughout my research, which in turn has been fuelled by my search for answers:

1. *"How can the gap be bridged between the disaster community and those with experience and expertise?"* This stimulated subsidiary questions such as *"How can the people in the wider 'ripples' of the disaster impact be reached?"* and *"How can the stigma of accepting help be broken down?"* In particular, *"How can children, young people and other marginalised groups be offered support?"*
2. *"How can the human impact of disaster be managed in a way that does not create further trauma and stress to the community and disaster workers?"*
3. *"How can I make sense of my seemingly illogical reactions as a worker, not a direct victim, and how do these compare with others caught up in disaster in many different ways?"*

## APPENDIX II

### A MENU OF POST-DISASTER METHODS

The following is a list of methods that I can draw on in my post-disaster work. However, rather than using single methods, there is a need for a strategy of choices used in a timely way. I have made a distinction between methods designed for individuals and those designed for groups, organisations and communities. With the proliferation of methods promoted on the internet, sorting out the choices can itself be a major source of stress for people.

#### RESPONSE METHODS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Any type of post-trauma support tends to be popularly described as trauma counselling, but this term covers a confusing range of responses. Counselling and therapy in their true sense (on-going therapeutic relationships with an agreed contract) are not usually appropriate immediately after a traumatic incident but may be invaluable later. Whatever method is used, there should be an agreement with the client so they are clear about the aims of the method, what they want to achieve and the emotional depth to which they will work. Clients need to understand that there is a process to be worked through, often using a range of methods, and it will not always be comfortable if real work is to be done. The methods described below, taken from a leaflet I use for clients, are those generally available in non-medical settings.

#### **Group 1: Immediate and Medium- term Methods for Individuals**

**Immediate crisis response methods.** Immediately after an incident, the 'Void' phase of the Trauma Process model, methods aim to construct 'safe' gathering grounds.

They focus on:

- the most important practical needs of clients for survival in the immediate future.
- making the person safe physically and emotionally
- the here and now and the next immediate step
- finding a metaphor to connect the event to the past and the future

Spontaneous expression of feelings will be acknowledged but help will be given to calm and control overwhelming emotions. Deeper or hidden feelings will be left alone.

Ensuring the client is safe and has access to other support is paramount. A simple, brief **defusing** procedure may be used which is brief, direct and focussed on helping

the client regain full control of their own decisions and choices. Acute symptoms may require medical help.

**Preventative education and problem solving:** Once the client has reached a position of some personal control and vision of 'the next step', then they may benefit from sessions that give them time for reflection and information, support and encouragement to develop coping strategies and learn about other support agencies. A balance has to be struck between building coping and safety while dealing with on-going repercussions and processing the incident and past unresolved trauma that is fuelling them. Preventative education is often given to parents, teachers and carers as a means by which children can be supported in the crucial early days after an incident when beliefs and behaviour can become fixed.

**Telling the story:** A client may want to explore their experiences of the disaster by telling their story. This is done in a safe setting to a person who can cope with the horrors and trauma within it. For some this will be all they wish to do, but telling the story without gaining some insight or taking action is seldom enough.

**Processing the story (sometimes called stress 'debriefing'):** There is a lot of confusion about the term debriefing because it is often used wrongly for work with individuals rather than staff teams. There are many ways for processing the story, some have rigid protocols, some use a more flexible approach. Essentially they help the client:

- tell their story by giving a framework, such as a set sequence of questions
- identify and acknowledge their emotions, without in-depth exploration of them
- mobilise their existing coping strategies and support network
- learn new coping strategies
- formulate some action for personal or other change and learning.

A follow-up session to check progress should always be arranged. Further sessions or referral for more specialist treatment may follow. Non-verbal methods have been devised for work with children and people who do not want to tell the story verbally.

**Other processing methods – the 'power' trauma methods:** These reduce, anticipate and manage the flashbacks and distressing reminders of the incident. Several new techniques, the 'power therapies', deal with specific trauma symptoms

such as recurring images. These need to be given within a therapeutic process to be fully effective.

They attract criticism from some people and adulation from others. The effectiveness of the following therapies has been documented by Deitrich et al, (2000):

- Traumatic Incident Reduction (TIR, [www.tir.org](http://www.tir.org)), a method of telling and retelling the story in great detail (Gerbode, 1995 & [www.tir.org](http://www.tir.org))
- Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques such as the visual-kinaesthetic dissociation 'rewind' method (Bandler and Grinder, 1979, Andreas & Andreas, 1989. & [www.nlp.org](http://www.nlp.org))
- Thought Field Therapy (TFT), a method devised by Roger Callahan using tapping on acupressure points (Callahan, 2002 & [www.thoughtfield.com](http://www.thoughtfield.com))
- Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR), an information processing method stimulating right-left movements using eyes, sound or touch to change negative into positive images (Shapiro, 1995 & [www.emdr.com](http://www.emdr.com)).  
[www.mailer.fsu.edu/~trauma](http://www.mailer.fsu.edu/~trauma))

## **Group 2: Long-term Methods for Individuals**

These are usually used if self-help and other early response methods are insufficient. Reactions may have been complicated by other past or current stresses and the on-going repercussions of the disaster.

**Counselling and psychotherapy.** There is much overlap between these but counselling tends to help people solve problems within their existing belief system while therapy goes much deeper and allows an investigation of underlying beliefs and assumptions, like reprogramming the hard drive of a computer. Some styles of counselling and therapy appeal to those who like a rational and systematic approach (such as cognitive-behavioural therapy) and some to those preferring a creative, spiritual approach.

**Medical referral.** Medical help through a referral to a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist may be a useful adjunct, or next step, to therapy especially for clinical conditions such as depression, mental illness or addiction. A residential environment may help complex cases or cases of alcohol or drug dependency.

**'Power Therapies'** (e.g. EMDR, NLP, TIR) described earlier may be used for dealing with persistent stuck images and perceptions.

**Work with young people.** Children and young people may benefit from an indirect approach where other physical and creative activities such as play, drama and art act as mediators for their distress or where education and support is provided to a co-ordinated network of parents, teachers and other carers.

### **RESPONSE METHODS FOR GROUPS**

These may be undertaken in conjunction with methods for individuals.

#### **Group 1: Immediate and medium-term crisis response methods for groups**

**Group Defusing:** a rapid procedure usually used in work situations after distressing work to encourage peer support and ensure a safe journey home. It helps detect acute reactions.

**Group processing or debriefing:** this provides a forum, usually for staff teams, to ensure that everyone has the same facts and a common understanding about an incident. It is NOT therapy but can act as a base from which other help can proceed. We use the style of debriefing most suitable for the group and the needs of the situation, or the CCME version called Critical Incident Review and Action.

**Work with children and young people, especially school-based work:** Response strategies can be devised to reach these groups using existing systems in established institutions such as schools and youth organisations, if their community has been affected by an internal or external disaster.

#### **Group 2: Longer-term methods for groups**

**Group therapy:** requires commitment to a group and usually operates over at least 6 sessions. It may be available in community settings but is more often found in mental health centres. Some groups are residential but only a few exist in the UK, including one for complex trauma sufferers at The Priory Hospital, Ticehurst House, East Sussex.

**Family therapy:** therapeutic work with families, as a group and with individuals.

**Grief Camps:** usually for children and teenagers using group work combined with traditional youth work methods through which children are helped to deal with their reactions and problems while having a lot of fun with children in a similar position to themselves. Camps are backed by individual and family work and sessions for parents. They are usually run by charities with links to Health and Social services

### **COMMUNITY BASED METHODS**

These are methods for promoting a healthy recovery environment in communities and other systems.

**Self-help or special interest groups:** There are many forms of self-help trauma and bereavement groups and groups linked to different types of trauma. Disaster Action ([www.disasteraction.org.uk](http://www.disasteraction.org.uk)) is an umbrella group for self-help groups linked to specific major disasters.

**Community methods** building on existing strengths and structures to create community information and support systems to encourage a healthy environment in which recovery is supported. These have been described in section D4:237-8.

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